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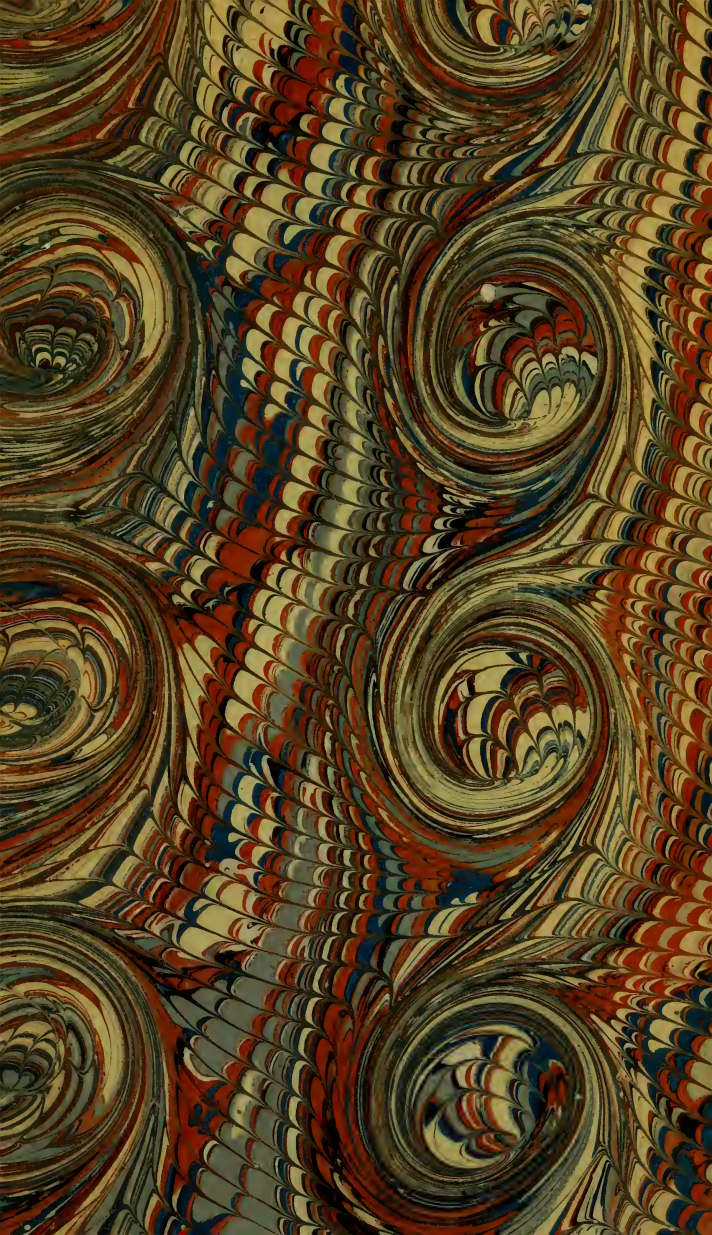

W. Henry Green

Philadelphia

July 1st 1850

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Rev. John Angell James.

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CHRISTIAN CHARITY

EXPLAINED;

OR THE

INFLUENCE OF RELIGION UPON TEMPER

STATED;

IN AN EXPOSITON OF THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER OF THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

BY JOHN ANGELL JAMES,

Author of the Christian Father's Present, &c. &c.

"Truth and Love are two of the most powerful things in the world; and when they both go together, they cannot easily be withstood. The golden beams of Truth, and the silken cords of Love, twisted together, will draw men on with a sweet violence, whether they will or no."—*Cudworth.*

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PREFACE.

A WORK which the Author published a few years since, on the Duties of Church Members, concludes with the following sentence:—"Let us remember, that HUMILITY and LOVE are the necessary fruits of our doctrines, the highest beauty of our character, and the guardian angels of our churches." To prove and elucidate this sentiment, and to state at greater length than it was possible for him to do in that treatise, the nature, operations, and importance of CHARITY; he was induced to enter upon a series of Discourses on the chapter which is the subject of this volume: These Discourses, were heard with much attention, and apparent interest. Before they were finished, many requests were presented for their publication; a promise was given to that effect, and the intention announced to the Public. On a further inspection of his notes, the Author saw so little that was either novel, or on any account worthy to meet the public eye, that he had for two years quite abandoned his intention of printing. Circumstances which need not be mentioned, together with frequent inquiries from his friends after the forthcoming treatise, drew his attention again to the subject a few months since, and revived the original purpose of sending from the press the substance of these plain and practical Discourses. That intention is now executed; with what results, the sovereign grace of Jehovah, to which it is humbly commended, must determine.

The Author offers this volume primarily and chiefly to his own friends, to whom it is dedicated. He has, however, by publishing it, placed it within the reach of the Public, though he can truly say, that he does not expect

much interest to be produced by his work, in the minds of many, beyond those who are prepared, by friendship, to value it above its intrinsic merits. One thing is certain, the subject is confessedly important, and it is as plain as it is important. It requires little argument to explain or to defend it; and as for eloquence to recommend and enforce it, the only power that can render it effectual for practical benefit, is the demonstration of the Spirit: without this aid, a giant in literature could do nothing, and the feeblest effort, by such assistance, may be successful. Too much has not been said, and cannot be said, about the *doctrines* of the Gospel; but too little may be said, and too little is said and thought, about its *spirit*. To contribute something towards supplying this deficiency in the treasures of the temple, the Author offers this small volume; and though it be but as the widow's two mites, yet, as it is all he has to give, as it is given willingly, and with a desire to glorify God, he humbly hopes that however it may be despised by those, who he rejoices to know, are so much richer than himself in intellectual and moral affluence, it will not be rejected by him, who more regards the motive than the amount of every offering that is carried to his altar.

The Author can easily suppose, that among many other faults which the scrutinizing eye of criticism will discover in his work, and which its stern voice will condemn, one is the tautologies, of which, in some places, it appears to be guilty. In answer to this, he can only remark, that in the discussion of such a subject, where the parts are divided by such almost imperceptible lines and softened down so much into each other, he found it very difficult to avoid this repetition, which, after all, is perhaps not always a fault—at least not a capital one.

Edgbaston, *April* 22, 1828.

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CHAPTER I.

THE OCCASION OF PAUL'S DESCRIPTION AND ENFORCEMENT OF CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

THE credibility of the Gospel, as a revelation from heaven, was attested by miracles, as had been predicted by the prophet Joel. "And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and the handmaidens in those days, I will pour out my Spirit." This prophecy began to receive its accomplishment when our Lord entered upon his public ministry,—but was yet more remarkably fulfilled, according to the testimony of Peter, on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples "were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance;" and still continued to be fulfilled till the power of working miracles was withdrawn from the Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ ceased not, during his continuance on earth, to prove, by these splendid achievements, the truth of his claims as the Son of God; and constantly appealed to them in his controversy with the Jews, as the reasons and the grounds of faith in his communications. By him the power of working miracles was conferred on his apostles, who,

in the exercise of this extraordinary gift, cast out demons, and "healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease." Christ also assured them that, under the dispensation of the Spirit, which was to commence after his decease, their miraculous powers should be so much enlarged and multiplied, as to exceed those which had been exercised by himself. This took place on the day of Pentecost, when the ability to speak all languages without previous study was conferred upon them. The apostles, as the ambassadors and messengers of their risen Lord, were authorized and enabled to invest others with the high distinction; for, to confer the power of working miracles, was a prerogative confined to the apostolic office. This is evident from many parts of the New Testament. But while apostles only could *communicate* this power, any one, not excepting the most obscure and illiterate member of the churches, could receive it; as it was not confined to Church officers, whether ordinary or extraordinary. It is probable that these gifts were sometimes distributed among all the original members of a church: as the society increased, they were confined to a more limited number, and granted only to such as were more eminent among the brethren, till at length they were probably confined to the elders; thus being as gradually withdrawn from the Church as they had been communicated.

These miraculous powers were of various kinds, which are enumerated at length in the epistle to the Romans. "Having then gifts, differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion (analogy) of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; or he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." They are set forth still more at length, in the twelfth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are

differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal: for to one is given by the Spirit, the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues."

It is not necessary that we should here explain the nature, and trace the distinction, of these endowments —a task which has been acknowledged by all expositors to be difficult, and which is thought by some to be impossible. But vague and general as is the idea of them which we possess, we can form some conception of the strange and novel spectacle presented by a society in which they were in full operation. They constituted the light which fell from heaven upon the Church, and to which she appealed, as the proofs of her divine origin. It is not easy for us to conceive of any thing so striking and impressive, as a community of men thus remarkably endowed. We may entertain a general, though not an adequate, idea of the spiritual glory which shone upon an assembly, where one member would pour forth, in strains of inspired eloquence, the profoundest views of the divine economy, and would be succeeded by another, who, in the exercise of the gift of knowledge, would explain the mysteries of truth, concealed under the symbols of the Jewish dispensation;—where one, known perhaps to be illiterate, would rise, and in a language which he had never studied, descant, without hesitation and without embarrassment, on the sublimest topics of revealed truth; and would be followed by another, who, in the capacity of an interpreter, would render into the vernacular tongue all that had been spoken;—where one would heal the most inveterate diseases of the body with a word, and another discern by a glance the secrets of the mind, and disclose the hypocrisy which lurked un-

der the veil of the most specious exterior. What seeming confusion, and yet what real grandeur, must have attended such a scene? What were the disputations of the schools, the eloquence of the forum, or the martial pomp, the accumulating wealth, the literary renown of the Augustan age of the Roman Empire to this extraordinary spectacle? Yea, what was the gorgeous splendour of the temple of Solomon, in the zenith of its beauty, compared with this? Here were the tokens and displays of a present though invisible Deity; a glory altogether unearthly and inimitable, and on that account the more remarkable.

For the possession and exercise of these gifts, the Church at Corinth was eminently distinguished. This is evident from the testimony of Paul,—"I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Christ Jesus; that in everything ye are enriched by him in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift: and in another place he asks them—"What is it, wherein ye were inferior to other Churches?" It is, indeed, both a humiliating and an admonitory consideration, that the Church which, of all those planted by the Apostles, was the most distinguished for its gifts, should have been the least eminent for its graces; for this was the case with the Christian Society at Corinth. What a scandalous abuse and profanation of the Lord's Supper had crept in! What a schismatical spirit prevailed! What a connivance at sin existed! What resistance to apostolic authority was set up!

To account for this, it should be recollected, that the possession of miraculous gifts by no means implied the existence and influence of sanctifying grace. Those extraordinary powers were entirely distinct from the qualities which are essential to the character of a real Christian. They were powers conferred not at all, or in a very subordinate degree, for the benefit of the individual himself, but were distributed according to the sovereignty of the Divine will, for the edification of

believers, and the conviction of unbelievers. Hence saith the apostle,—"Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. Our Lord has informed us, that miraculous endowments were not necessarily connected with, but were often disconnected from, personal piety. "Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me ye workers of iniquity." Paul supposes the same thing in the commencement of this chapter, where he says,—"Though I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge;—and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." This hypothetical mode of speech certainly implies, that gifts and grace are not necessarily connected.

This is a very awful consideration, and, by showing how far self-deception may be carried, ought to be felt as a solemn admonition to all professing Christians, to be very careful and diligent in the great business of self-examination.

It is evident, both from the nature of things, and from the reasoning of the Apostle, that some of the miraculous powers were more admired, and therefore more popular, than others. The gift of tongues, as is plain from the reasoning in the fourteenth chapter, appears to have been most coveted, because eloquence was so much cultivated by the Greeks: to reason and declaim in public, as a talent, was much admired, and, as a practice, was exceedingly common: schools were established to teach the art, and places of public resort were frequented to display it. Hence, in the Church of Christ, and especially with those whose hearts were

unsanctified by Divine grace, and who converted miraculous operations into a means of personal ambition, the gift of tongues was the most admired of all these extraordinary powers. A desire after conformity to the envied distinctions of the world, has ever been the snare and the reproach of many of the members of the Christian community.

Where distinctions exist, many evils will be sure to follow, as long as human nature is in an imperfect state. Talents, or the power of fixing attention and raising admiration, will be valued above virtues; and the more popular talents will occupy, in the estimate of ambition, a higher rank than those that are useful. Consequently, we must expect, wherever opportunities present themselves, to see on the one hand, pride, vanity, arrogance, love of display, boasting, selfishness, conscious superiority, and a susceptibility of offence; while on the other, we shall witness an equally offensive exhibition of envy, suspicion, imputation of evil, exultation over failures, and a disposition to magnify and report offences. Such passions are not entirely excluded from the Church of God, at least during its militant state; and they were most abundantly exhibited among the Christians at Corinth. Those who had gifts, were too apt to exult over those that had none; while the latter indulged in envy, and ill-will toward the former: those who were favoured with the most distinguished endowments, vaunted of their achievements over those who attained only to the humbler powers; and all the train of the irascible passions was indulged to such a degree, as well nigh to banish Christian love from the fellowship of the faithful. This unhappy state of things the Apostle found it necessary to correct, which he did by a series of most conclusive arguments; such, for instance, as that all these gifts are the bestowments of the Spirit, who in distributing them exercises a wise but irresponsible sovereignty—that they are all bestowed for mutual advantage, and not for personal glory—that this variety is essential to

general edification—that the useful ones are to be more valued than those of a dazzling nature—that they are dependent on each other for their efficiency; and he then concludes his expostulation and representation, by introducing to their notice that heavenly virtue which he so beautifully describes in the chapter under consideration, and which he exalts in value and importance above the most coveted miraculous powers. "Now, ye earnestly desire (for the words should be rendered indicatively, and not imperatively,) the best gifts, but yet I show unto you a more excellent way." "Ye are ambitious to obtain those endowments which shall cause you to be esteemed as the most honourable and distinguished persons in the Church; but, notwithstanding your high notions of the respect due to those who excel in miracles, I now point out to you a way to still greater honour, by a road open to you all, and in which your success will neither produce pride in yourselves, nor excite envy in others. FOLLOW AFTER CHARITY, for the possession and exercise of this grace is infinitely to be preferred to the most splendid gift."

Admirable encomium—exalted eulogium on Charity! What more could be said, or be said more properly, to raise it in our esteem, and to impress it upon our heart? The age of miracles is past; the signs, and the tokens, and the powers which accompanied it, and which, like brilliant lights from heaven, hung in bright effulgence over the Church, are vanished. No longer can the members or ministers of Christ confound the mighty, perplex the wise, or guide the simple inquirer after truth, by the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power: the control of the laws of nature, and of the spirits of darkness, is no longer intrusted to us; but that which is more excellent and more heavenly remains: that which is more valuable in itself, and less liable to abuse, continues; and that is, CHARITY. Miracles were but the credentials of Christianity, but CHARITY is its essence; miracles but its witnesses, which, having ushered it into the world, and borne their

testimony, retired for ever;—but CHARITY is its very soul, which, when disencumbered of all that is earthly, shall ascend to its native seat—the paradise and the presence of the eternal God.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE OF CHARITY.

In the discussion of every subject, it is of great importance to ascertain, and to fix with precision, the meaning of the terms by which it is expressed; more especially in those cases where, as in the present instance, the principal word has acquired, by the changes of time and usages of society, more senses than one. Formerly, the English word *charity* signified good-will or benevolence: when restricted to this meaning, it was significant enough of the Greek term employed by the Apostle in this chapter; but in modern times the word charity is often employed to signify almsgiving—a circumstance which has thrown a partial obscurity over many passages of Scripture, and has led, indeed, to the most gross perversion of Divine truth and the circulation of the most dangerous errors. That the charity which is the subject of the present treatise cannot mean almsgiving, is evident from the assertion of the Apostle, where he says—"Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." The meaning of the term is Love, and so it is rendered in many other passages of the New Testament; such, for instance, as the following:—"Love worketh no ill to its neighbour." "The

fruit of the Spirit is love." "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "Faith which worketh by love." It is the same word in all these texts, which in the present chapter, and in the following passages, is rendered charity. "The end of the commandment is charity." "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." The employment of the term charity, instead of love, in the last quoted passage, is peculiarly to be regretted, as, in consequence of the modern meaning attached to it, many have taken up the false and dangerous notion, that pecuniary liberality to the poor will make an atonement for human guilt; an error which could have had no countenance from Scripture, had the word been rendered as it is in other places. "*Love* covereth a multitude of sins." This is not the only case in which our translators, by the capricious employment in different places of two English words for the same Greek term, have helped to confuse the English reader of the Holy Scriptures.

We shall in this treatise substitute for charity the word LOVE, which is a correct translation of the original. If, however, the word *charity* should be occasionally used to avoid a too frequent repetition of *love*, we beg that it may be understood as synonymous with that term.

Of what *kind* of love does the Apostle treat? Not of love *to God*, as is evident from the whole chapter; for the properties which are here enumerated have no direct reference to Jehovah, but relate in every instance to man. It is a disposition founded, no doubt upon love to God, but it is not the same.

Nor is it, as many have represented, the love of the *brethren*. Without all question, we are under special obligations to love those who are the children of God, and joint heirs with us in Christ. "This is my commandment," says Christ, "that ye love one another." "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Our brethren in Christ should be the first and dearest objects of our regard. Love to *them* is the badge of discipleship—the proof, both to ourselves and to the world, that we have passed

from death unto life. And although we are "to do good to all men," yet we are especially to regard "the household of faith." But still, brotherly love, or the love of the brethren as such, is not the disposition, any otherwise than as included in it, which is here enjoined.

A far more comprehensive duty is laid down, which is LOVE TO MANKIND IN GENERAL. As a proof of this I refer to the nature of its exercises. Do they not as much respect the unconverted as the converted; the unbeliever as the believer? Are we not as much bound to be meek and kind, humble, forgiving, and patient, towards all men, as we are towards our brethren? Or, may we be envious, passionate, proud, and revengeful, towards "those that are without," though not towards those "that are within?" We have only to consider the operations and effects of love as here described, and to recollect that they are as much required in our intercourse with the world, as with the Church, to perceive at once, that it is love *to man*, as such, that is the subject of this chapter. Nor is this the only place where universal philanthropy is enjoined. The Apostle Peter, in his chain of graces, makes this the last link, and distinguishes it from "brotherly kindness," to which, says he, add "charity," or, as it should be rendered, "love." The disposition inculcated in this chapter is, that love which Peter commands us to *add* to brotherly kindness; it is, in fact, the very state of mind which is the compendium of the second table of the moral law, "Thou shalt *love thy neighbour* as thyself."

The temper so beautifully set forth by Paul, is a most lively, luminous and eloquent exposition of this summary of duty to our neighbour, which is given us by our Lord.

Strange, indeed, would it be, if Christianity, the most perfect system, of duty as well as of doctrine, that God ever gave to the world, should contain no injunction to cultivate a spirit of general good-will. Strange, indeed, if that system, which rises upon the

earth with the smiling aspect of universal benevolence, did not breathe its own spirit into the hearts of its believers. Strange, indeed, if, while God loved the world, and Christ died for it, the world in no sense was to be an object of a Christian's regard. Strange, indeed, if the energies, the exercises, and propensities of true piety, were to be confined within the narrow boundaries, of the Church, and to be allowed no excursions into the widely extended regions that lie beyond, and have no sympathies for the countless millions by which these regions are peopled. It would have been regarded as a blank in Christianity,as a deep wide chasm, had philanthropy gained no place, or but a small one, amidst its duties; and such an omission must ever have presented a want of harmony between its doctrines and its precepts; a point of dissimilarity between the perfection of the divine, and the required completeness of the human, character. Here, then, is the disposition inculcated: *a spirit of universal love;* good will to man; a delight in human happiness; a carefulness to avoid whatever would lessen, and to do whatever would increase, the amount of the felicity of mankind: a love that is limited to no circle; that is restricted by no partialities, no friendships, no relationships; around which neither prejudices nor aversions are allowed to draw a boundary; which realizes, as its proper objects, friends, strangers, and enemies; which requires no recommendation of any one but that he is a man, and which searches after man wherever he is to be found. It is an affection which binds its possessor to all of his kind, and makes him a good citizen of the universe. We must possess domestic affections, to render us good members of a family; we must have the more extended principles of patriotism, to render us good members of the state; and for the same reason, we must possess universal benevolence, to render us good members of a system which comprises the whole human race. This is the generic virtue, the one simple principle out of which so many and such beautiful ramifications of holy benevolence evolve.

All the actings of love, so finely described by the Apostle, may be traced up to this delight in happiness: they all consist in doing that which will promote the comfort of others, or in not doing that which will hinder their peace;—whether they consist in passive or in active properties, they have a direct bearing on general well-being.

It will be proper to remark here, that by universal benevolence, we mean nothing that bears the most distant resemblance to the spurious philanthropy advocated some few years since by a school of modern infidels, who resolved all virtue into a chimerical passion for the public good; and the characteristic feature of whose system it was, to build up general benevolence on the destruction of individual tenderness. Reason and revelation unite in teaching us, that in the developement of the passions we must advance from the private to public affections, and that extended benevolence is the last and most perfect fruit of individual regards.

But although we represent this love as consisting in a principle of universal benevolence, we would remark, that instead of satisfying itself with mere speculations on the desirableness of the well-being of the whole, or with mere good wishes for the happiness of mankind in general; instead of that indolent sentimentalism, which would convert its inability to benefit the great body into an excuse for doing good to none of its members;—it will put forth its energies, and engage its activities, for those which are within its reach: it would, if it could, touch the extreme parts; but as this cannot be done, it will exert a beneficial influence on those which are near; its very distance from the circumference will be felt as a motive to greater zeal in promoting the comfort of all that may be contiguous; and it will consider that the best and only way of reaching the last, is by an impulse given to what is next. It will view every individual it has to do with as a representative of his species, and consider him as preferring strong claims, both on his own account and on the account of

his race. Towards all, it will retain a feeling of good-will, a preparedness for benevolent activity; and towards those who come within the sphere of its influence, it will go forth in the actings of kindness. Like the organ of vision, it can dilate, to comprehend, though but dimly, the whole prospect; or it can contract its view, and concentrate its attention upon each individual object that comes under its inspection. The persons with whom we daily converse and act, are those on whom our benevolence is first and most constantly to express itself, because these are the parts of the whole, which give us the opportunity of calling into exercise our universal philanthropy. But to them it is not to be confined, either in feeling or action; for, as we have opportunity, we are to do good to all men, and send abroad our beneficent regards to the great family of man.

Nor are we to confound this virtue with a mere natural amiableness of disposition. It is often our lot to witness a species of philanthropy which, like the painting or the bust, is a very near resemblance of the original; but which still is only a picture, or a statue, that wants the mysterious principle of life. From that mere good-will to man, which even unconverted persons may possess, the love described by the Apostle differs in the following particulars.

1. *It is one of the fruits of regeneration.* "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Unless a man be born of the Spirit, he can do nothing that is spiritually good. We are by nature corrupt and unholy—destitute of all love to God—and till renewed by the Holy Ghost in the spirit of our mind, we can do nothing well pleasing to God. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" and this love of our species is a part of the new creation. It is, in the strictest sense of the term, a *holy* virtue, and one great branch of holiness itself; for what is holiness, but love to God, and love to man? And without that previous change which is denominated being "born again," we can no more love man as we ought to do, than we can love God. Divine grace

is as essentially necessary for the production and the exercise of philanthropy, as it is for piety; and the former is no less a part of religion than the latter. Love is the Divine nature, the image of God, which is communicated to the soul of man by the renewing influence of the Holy Ghost.

2. This love *is the effect of faith:* hence it is said by the Apostle, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, *but faith which worketh by love.*" And by another inspired writer, it is represented as a part of the superstructure which is raised on the basis of faith:—"Add to your faith—love." It is certain that there can be no proper regard to man, which does not result from faith in Christ. It is the belief of the truth which makes love to be felt as a duty, and which brings before the mind the great examples, the powerful motives, furnished by the Scriptures to promote its exercise. Nothing spiritually excellent can be performed without faith. It is by faith alone, that anything we do is truly and properly religion: this is the identifying Christian principle, separate and apart from which, whatever excellence men may exhibit, is but mere morality. By faith we submit to the authority of God's law; by faith we are united to Christ, and "receive from his fulness and grace for grace;" by faith we contemplate the love of God in Christ; by faith our conduct becomes acceptable to God through Christ.

3. *This love is exercised in obedience to the authority of God's word.* It is a principle, not merely a feeling; it is cultivated and exercised as a duty, not yielded to merely as a generous instinct; it is a submission to God's command, not merely an indulgence of our own propensities; it is the constraint of conscience, not merely the impulse of constitutional tenderness. It may be, and often is, found where there is no natural softness or amiableness of temper: where this exists, it will grow with greater rapidity, and expand to greater magnitude, and flourish in greater beauty, like the mountain ash in the rich mould of the valley; but it

still may be planted, like that noble tree, in a less congenial situation, and thrive, in obedience to the law of its nature, amidst barrenness and rocks. Multitudes, who have nothing of sentimentalism in their nature, have love to man; they rarely can melt into tears, or kindle into rapture—but they can be all energy and activity for the relief of misery, and for the promotion of human happiness: their temperament of mind partakes more of the frigid than of the torrid, and their summer seasons of the soul are short and cold; but still, amidst their mild and even lovely winter, charity, like the rose of Pæstum, blooms in fragrance and in beauty. This is their motto—"God has commanded me to love my neighbour as myself; and in obedience to him I restrain my natural tendency, and forgive the injuries, and relieve the miseries, and build up the comfort, and hide the faults, of all around me."

4. *It is founded upon, and grows out of love to God.* We are to love God for his own sake, and men for God's sake. Our Lord has laid down this as the order and rule of our affections. We must first love God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and *then* our neighbour as ourselves. Now, there can be no proper religious affection for our neighbour, which does not spring out of supreme regard for Jehovah; since our love to our neighbour must respect him as the offspring and workmanship of God: "and if we love not him that begat, how can we love him that is begotten of him?" Besides, as we are to exercise this disposition in obedience to the authority of God, and as no obedience to his authority can be valuable in itself, or acceptable to him, which is not an operation of love, no kindness to our neighbour can come up to the nature of the duty here enjoined, which does not arise out of a proper state of heart towards God. We love any thing more truly and properly, the more explicitly we acknowledge and love God in it; upon the view of those strokes and lineaments of the divine beauty, and the characters of his glory, which are discernible in all his creatures, our love should someway be commensurate with the

occasion, and comprehend the universe in its large and complacential embraces. Though, as any thing is of higher excellency, and hath more lively touches and resemblances of God upon it, or, by the disposition of his providence and law, more nearly approaches us, and is more immediately presented to our notice, converse, use, or engagement; so our love should be towards it more explicitly, in a higher degree, or with more frequency. As man, therefore, hath in him more of divine resemblance of God's natural likeness and image—good men, of his moral holy image—we ought to love men more than the inferior creatures, and those that are good and holy more than other men; and those with whom we are more concerned, with a more definitive love, and which is required to be more frequent in its exercise: but all from the attractive of somewhat divine appearing in the object. So that all rational love, or that is capable of being regulated and measured by a law, is only so far right in its own kind, as we love God in everything, and everything upon his account, and for his sake. The nature and spirit of man is, by the apostacy, become disaffected and strange to God—alienated from the divine life—addicted to a particular limited good, to the creature for itself, apart from God; whereupon the things men love are their idols, and men's love is idolatry. But when, by regeneration, a due propension towards God is restored, the universal good draws their minds; they become inclined and enlarged towards it; and, as that is diffused, their love follows it, and flows towards it everywhere. They love all things principally in and for God; and therefore such men most, as excel in goodness, and in whom the Divine image more brightly shines.*

Let us, then, remember that the beautiful superstructure of philanthropy, which the Apostle has raised in this chapter, has for its foundation a supreme regard for the great and blessed God. The utmost kindness and sympathy; the most tender compassion, united

* Howe on Charity in Reference to other Men's Sins.

with the most munificent liberality; if it do not rest on the love of God, is not the temper here set forth—is not the grace which has the principle of immortality in its nature, and which will live and flourish in eternity, when faith and hope shall cease. Human excellence, however distinguished, whatever good it may diffuse upon others, or whatever glory it may draw around itself, if it be not sanctified and supported by this holy principle, is corruptible and mortal, and cannot dwell in the presence of God, nor exist amidst the glories of eternity; but is only the flower of the grass which shall wither away in the rebuke of the Almighty. For want of this vital and essential principle of all true religion, how much of amiable compassion, and of tender attention to the woes of humanity—how much of kindly feeling and active benevolence,—is daily expended, which, while it yields its amiable though unrenewed professor much honour and delight, has not the weight of a feather in the scales of his eternal destiny.

5. *This disposition is cherished in our heart by a sense of God's love in Christ Jesus to us.*

There is this peculiarity in the morality of the New Testament;—it is not only enforced by the consideration of Divine power, but by a distinct and repeated reference to Divine goodness. Not that any motive is absolutely necessary to make a command binding upon our conscience, beyond God's right to issue it; the obligation to duty is complete, in the absence of every other consideration than the rightful authority of the command: but as man is a creature capable of being moved by appeals to his gratitude, as well as by motives addressed to his fear, it is both wise and condescending, on the part of Jehovah, thus to deal with him, and to "make him *willing* in the day of his power." He thus not only drives us by the force of his terrors, but draws us by the cords of his love.

The great evangelical inducement to mutual affection between man and man, is God's love in Christ Jesus to us. God has commended and manifested his love to us in a manner that will fill immensity and eter-

nity with astonishment: He has "so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This stupendous exhibition of Divine mercy is presented by the sacred writers, not only as a source of strong consolation, but also as a powerful motive to action; we are not only to contemplate it for the purpose of joy, but also of imitation. Mark the beautiful reasoning of the apostle John—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Similar to this is also the inference of Paul—"And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers (imitators) of God, as dear children, and walk in love as Christ who hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour." How forcible, yet how tender, is such language! there is a charm in such a motive, which no terms can describe. The love of God, then, in its existence and arrangements from eternity; in its manifestation in time by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; in its topless height, its fathomless depth, its measureless length and breadth; —is the grand inducement to universal affection: and is it not enough to soften a heart of stone—to melt a heart of ice? The love spoken of in the chapter under consideration, is that impulse towards our fellow-men which is given us by the cross of Christ: it is not mere natural kindness, but it is love for Christ's sake; it is not the mere operations of a generous temper, but it is the feeling which moved in the Apostle's breast, when he exclaimed, "The love of Christ constraineth us;" it is not natural religion, but Christianity; it is, so to speak, a plant which grows on Calvary, and entwines itself for support around the cross. It is a disposition which argues in this way: "Has God indeed thus loved me, so as to give his Son for my salvation? and is he kind to me daily for the sake of Christ? Has he for-

given all my numberless and aggravated transgressions? Does he still, with infinite patience, bear with all my infirmities and provocations? Then what is there, in the way of most generous affection, I ought not to be willing to do, or to bear, or to sacrifice, for others? Do they *offend* me, let me bear with them, and forgive them; for how has God forborne with me, and blotted out my sins? Do they *want*, let me be forward to supply their necessities; for how has God supplied mine!" Here, then, is love—that deep sense of God's love to us, which shows us the necessity, the reasonableness, the duty, of being kind to others; the feeling of a heart, which, labouring under the weight of its obligations to God, and finding itself too poor to extend its goodness to him, looks round, and gives utterance to its exuberant gratitude in acts of kindness to man.

6. *It is that goodwill to man which, while its proximate object is the welfare of our fellow-creatures, is ultimately directed to the glory of God.*

It is the sublime characteristic of every truly Christian virtue, that whatever inferior ends it may seek, and through whatever intervening medium it may pass, it is directed ultimately to the praise of Jehovah: it may put forth its excellencies before the admiring eyes of mortals, and exert its energies for their happiness; but neither to attract their applause, nor to build up their interests, must be its highest aim. The rule of our conduct, as to its chief end, is thus explicitly and comprehensively laid down: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." This is not mere advice, but a command—and it is a command extending to all our conduct. To glorify God is to act so as that his authority shall be recognized and upheld by us in the world; it is to be seen submitting to his will, and behaving so as that his word and ways shall be better thought of by mankind. Our actions must appear to have a reference to God; and without this, they cannot partake of the character of religion, however excellent and beneficial they may seem.

But perhaps this disposition of mind will be best illustrated by exhibiting an example of it; and where shall we find one suited to our purpose? Every mind will perhaps immediately revert to HIM who was love incarnate; and we might indeed point to every action of his benevolent career as a display of the purest philanthropy: but as his example will hereafter be considered, we shall now select one from men of like passions with ourselves; but we must go for it to "the chamber where the good man meets his fate," rather than to the resorts of the healthy and the active; for it seems as if the brightest beauties of this love were reserved, like those of the setting sun, for the eve of its departure to another hemisphere. How often have we beheld the dying Christian, who, during long and mortal sickness, has exhibited, as he stood on the verge of heaven, something of the spirit of a glorified immortal. The natural infirmities of temper, which attended him through life, and which sometimes dimmed the lustre of his piety, disquieted his own peace, and lessened the pleasure of his friends, had all departed, or had sunk into the shade of those holy graces which then stood out in bold and commanding relief upon his soul. The beams of heaven now falling upon his spirit were reflected, not only in the faith that is the confidence of things not seen—not only in the hope which entereth within the vail,—but in the love which is the greatest in the trinity of Christian virtues. How lowly in heart did he seem—how entirely clothed with humility! Instead of being puffed up with anything of his own, or uttering a single boasting expression, it was like a wound in his heart to hear any one remind him either of his good deeds or dispositions; and he appeared in his own eyes less than ever, while, like his emblem, the setting sun, he expanded every moment into greater magnitude in the view of every spectator. Instead of envying the possessions or the excellencies of other men, it was a cordial to his departing spirit that he was leaving them thus distinguished: how kind was he to his friends!—and as for enemies, he had

none; enmity had died in his heart, he forgave all that was manifestly evil, and kindly interpreted all that was only equivocally so. Nothing lived in his recollection, as to the conduct of others, but their acts of kindness. When intelligence reached his ear of the misconduct of those who had been his adversaries, he grieved in spirit, even as he rejoiced when told of their coming back to public esteem by deeds of excellence. His very opinions seemed under the influence of his love; and, as he wished well, he believed well, or hoped well, of many of whom he had formerly thought evil. His meekness and patience were touching, his kindness indescribable; the trouble he gave, and the favours he received, drew tears from his own eyes, and were acknowledged in expressions that drew tears from all around. There was an ineffable tenderness in his looks, and his words were the very accents of benignity. He lay a pattern of all the passive virtues; and having thus thrown off much that was of the earth, earthly, and put on charity as a garment, and dressed himself for heaven, in its ante-chamber, his sick room, he departed to be with Christ, and to be for ever perfect in love.

There was a man in whom this was realized, and some extracts from his invaluable Memoir will prove it; I mean Mr. Scott, the author of the Commentary.

"His mind," says his biographer, "dwelt much upon love: God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Faith worketh by love. He seemed full of tenderness and affection to all around him. 'One evidence,' he said, 'I *have* of meetness for heaven: I feel much love to all mankind—to *every* man upon earth—to those who have most opposed and slandered me,' To his servant he said, 'I thank you for all your kindness to me. If at any time I have been hasty and short, forgive me, and pray to God to forgive me; but lay the blame upon *me*, not upon religion.'"

"His tender affection for us all is astonishing in such a state of extreme suffering, and cuts us to the heart,

He begged his curate to forgive him, if he had been occasionally rough and sharp. 'I meant it for your good, but, like every thing of mine, it was mixed with sin; impute it not, however, to my religion, but to my want of religion.' He is so gentle and loving—it is so delightful to attend upon him,—that his servants, finding themselves in danger of contention which should wait upon him, agreed to take it by turns, that each might have her due share of the pleasure and benefit; and yet he is continually begging our forgiveness for his want of patience and thankfulness. His kindness and affection to all who approached him were carried to the greatest height, and showed themselves in a singularly minute attention to all their feelings, and, whatever might be for their comfort, to a degree that was quite affecting—especially when he was suffering so much himself, often in mind as well as body. There was an astonishing absence of selfish feelings: even in his worst hours he thought of the health of us all; observed if we sat up long, and insisted on our retiring; and was much afraid of paining or hurting us in any way. Mr. D. said something on the permanency of his Commentary; 'Ah!' he cried, with a semi-contemptuous smile; and added, 'you know not what a proud heart I have, and how you help the Devil.' He proceeded: 'There is one feeling I cannot have, if I would: those that have opposed my doctrine, have slandered me sadly; but I cannot feel any resentment; I can only love and pity them, and pray for their salvation. I never did feel any resentment towards them; I only regret that I did not more ardently long and pray for their salvation.'—This *is love*, and how lovely is it!"

Can we conceive of a more beautiful exemplification of the virtue I am describing? and this is the temper we ought all to seek. This is the grace, blended with all our living habits, diffused through all our conduct, forming our character, breathing in our desires, speaking in our words, beaming in our eyes; in short, a living part of our living selves. And *this*, be it remembered, is religion—practical religion.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIAN LOVE IS NOT TO BE CONFOUNDED WITH THAT SPURIOUS CANDOUR WHICH CONSISTS IN INDIFFERENCE TO RELIGIOUS SENTIMENT, OR IN CONNIVANCE AT SINFUL PRACTICES.

A SEPARATE and entire section is devoted to this distinction of love from a counterfeit resemblance of it, because of the importance of the subject, and the frequency with which the mistake is made of confounding things which are so different from each other. No terms have been more misunderstsod or abused than candour and charity. Some have found in them an act of toleration for all religious opinions, however opposed to one another or to the word of God, and a bull of indulgences for all sinful practices which do not transgress the laws of our country: so that, by the aid of these two words, all truth and holiness may be driven out of the world; for if error be innocent, truth must be unimportant; and if we are to be indulgent towards the sins of others, under the sanction and by the command of Scripture, holiness can be of no consequence either to them or ourselves.

If we were to hearken to some, we should conceive of Charity, not as she really is—a spirit of ineffable beauty, descending from heaven upon our distracted

earth, holding in her hand the torch of truth, which she had lighted at the fountain of celestial radiance, and clad in a vest of unsullied purity; and who, as she entered upon the scene of discord, proclaimed "glory to God in the highest," as well as "peace on earth, good-will to men:" and having with these magic words healed the troubled waters of strife, proceeding to draw men closer to each other, by drawing them closer to Christ, the common centre of believers; and then hushing the clamours of contention, by removing the pride, the ignorance, and the depravity, which produced them.* No: but we should think of her as a lying spirit—clad, indeed, in some of the attire of an angel of light, but bearing no heavenly impress, holding no torch of truth, wearing no robe of holiness; smiling perhaps, but like a sycophant, upon all without distinction; calling upon men, as they are combating for truth and striving against sin, to sheathe their swords and cast away their shields, to be indulgent towards each other's vices and tolerant of each other's errors; because they all mean and feel substantially alike, though they have different modes of expressing their opinions and of giving utterance to their feelings. Is this charity?—No; it is Satan in the habiliments of Gabriel.

That there is much of this spurious candour in the world, and that it is advocated by great names, will appear by the following quotation from Dr. Priestley: —"If we could be so happy, as to believe that there

* An Anonymous American writer has given the following eloquent description.

"Her throne seemed ivory, and over her white robes floated an azure mantle besprinkled with drops of heavenly lustre. On her head was a chaplet of such flowers as spring in the regions of bliss; and the summit of the diadem, was distinguished by a centre of rays that resembled the morning-star. The bloom of eternal youth was in her countenance, but her majestic form can only be described in the language of that world where she is fully known. In her right hand was "the sword of the Spirit," and at her side the symbols of power and majesty. Beneath her feet the clouds were condensed in awful darkness, and her chariot was borne along by the breath of the Almighty. (A. E.)

are no errors but what men may be so circumstanced as to be *innocently* betrayed into; that *any* mistake of the head is very consistent with rectitude of heart; and that all differences in modes of worship may be only the different methods by which different men, who are equally the offspring of God, are endeavouring to honour and obey their common parent;—our difference of opinion would have no tendency to lessen our mutual love and esteem." Dr. Priestley, and the followers of his religious system, are not peculiar in this sentiment. Pope's Universal Prayer is to the same effect.

> "Father of all, in every age,
> In every clime adored,
> By saint, by savage, or by sage,
> Jehovah, Jove, or Lord."

The well-known metrical adage of this poet is adapted to the full extent of its spirit and design, by great multitudes who suppose that they are quite orthodox both in opinion and practice, and who perhaps boast of their charity, while they exclaim—

> "For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight;
> His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right."

It is, I imagine, generally thought, by at least a great part of mankind, that it is of little consequence what a man's religious opinions are, provided his conduct be tolerably correct; that charity requires us to think well of his state; and that it is the very essence of bigotry to question the validity of his claim to the character of a Christian, or to doubt of the safety of his soul; in other words, it is pretended that benevolence requires us to think well of men, irrespective of religious opinions; and that it is almost a violation of the rule of love to attempt to unsettle their convictions, or to render them uneasy in the possession of their sentiments, although we may conclude them to be fundamentally wrong. But does this disregard of all opinions,—at

least, this disposition to think well of persons as to their religious character, and the safety of their souls, whatever may be the doctrines they hold,—enter essentially into the nature of love? Most certainly not; but actually opposes it. Benevolence is good will to men, but this is a very different thing from a good opinion of their principles and practices; so different, that the former may not only exist in all its force without the latter, but be actually incompatible with it; for if I believe that a man holds opinions that endanger his safety, benevolence requires, not that I should shut my eyes to his danger, and lull him into false confidence, but that I should bear my testimony and express my fears concerning his situation. Benevolence is a very different thing from complacency or esteem. These are founded on approbation of character; the other is nothing more than a desire to promote happiness.

The question, whether love is to be confounded with indifference to religious principle,—for such does the spurious candour I am contending against amount to,—is best decided by an appeal to Scripture. "Ye shall know the truth," said Christ; "and the truth shall make you free." "This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." With what emphasis did the Apostle speak of the conduct of those who attempted to pervert the great doctrine of justification by faith, by introducing the obsolete ceremonies of the Jewish law. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." Now, certainly, this is anything but indifference to religious opinion; for, be it observed, it was matter of opinion, and not the duties of morality, or of practical religion, that was here so strenuously opposed. The Apostle commands

Timothy "to hold fast the form of sound words; and to give himself to doctrine." The apostle John has this strong language:—"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine, of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." Jude commands us to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." From these, and many other passages which might be quoted, it is evident, not only that truth is important and necessary to salvation, but that error is guilty, and in many instances is connected with the loss of the soul. "If a man may disbelieve one truth, and yet be free from sin for so doing, he may disbelieve two; and if two, four; and if four, ten; and if ten, half the Bible; and if half the Bible, the whole; and if he may be a Deist, and yet be in a safe state; he may be an Atheist, and still go to heaven." To such awful lengths may the principle be pushed, that there is no guilt in mental error. "Let those," says Dr. Priestley, "who maintain that the mere holding of opinions (without regard to the motives and state of the mind through which men may have been led to form them,) will necessarily exclude them from the favour of God, be particulary careful with respect to the premises from which they draw so alarming a conclusion." Nothing can be more sophistical than this passage; for we do not, in maintaining the guiltiness of a false opinion, leave out the state of the heart; but contend that all errors in the judgment have their origin in the depravity of our nature, and, in so far as they prevail, discover a heart not brought into subjection to Christ. A perfectly holy mind could not err in the opinion it derived from the word of God: and it may be most fairly presumed that there are certain fundamental truths, which cannot be rejected, without such a degree of depravity of heart, as is utterly incompatible with true piety towards God.

It is to be recollected, that the holiness required in the word of God, is a very superior thing to what is called morality. Holiness is a right state of mind towards God, and it is enforced by motives drawn from the view which the Scriptures give us of the Divine nature, and of the Divine conduct towards us. If our views of God, and of his scheme of mercy, be incorrect, the motives which influence us cannot be correct. Hence all right feeling and conduct are traced up by the sacred writers to the *truth*. Do they speak of regeneration? they tell us we are "begotten by the incorruptible seed of the word." Do they speak of sanctification? they ascribe it, so far as instrumentality is concerned, to the truth; and the truth itself is characterized as a "doctrine according to godliness." It is evident, that without the truth, or, in other words, without right opinions, we can neither be born again of the Spirit, nor partake of true holiness. The whole process of practical and experimental religion is carried on by the instrumentality of right sentiments; and to suppose that holiness could be produced in the soul as well by error as by truth, is not only contrary to revelation, but no less contrary to reason. If truth sanctify, error must in some way or other pollute; for to suppose that two causes, not only so distinct but so opposite, can produce the same effect, is absurd; and the Scriptures everywhere insist upon the importance of the truth, not merely on its own account, but on account of its moral effect upon the soul.

If this view of the subject be correct, Christian charity cannot mean indifference to religious sentiment; for if so, it would be a temper of mind in direct opposition to a large portion of Scripture: nor are we required, by this virtue, to give the least countenance to what we think is error. We may, indeed, be called bigots; for this term, in the lips of many, means nothing more than a reproach for attaching importance to right sentiments. No word has been more misunderstood than this. If by bigotry is meant such an overweening attachment to our opinions, as makes us refuse to listen

to argument; such a blind regard to our own views, as closes the avenues of conviction; such a selfish zeal for our creed, as actually destroys benevolence, and causes us to hate those who differ from us;—it is an evil state of mind, manifestly at variance with love: but if, as is generally the case, it means, by those who use it, only zeal for truth, it is perfectly consistent with love, and actually a part of it; for "charity rejoiceth in the truth." It is quite compatible with good will to men, therefore, to attach high importance to doctrines, to condemn error, to deny the Christianity and safety of those who withhold their assent from fundamental truths, and to abstain from all such religious communion with them as would imply, in the least possible degree, any thing like indifference to opinion. It does appear to me, that the most perfect benevolence to men, is that which, instead of looking with complacency on their errors, warns them of their danger, and admonishes them to escape. It is no matter that *they* think they are in the right—this only makes their case the more alarming; and to act towards them as if we thought their mistaken views of no consequence, is only to confirm their delusion, and to aid their destruction.

It is true we are neither to despise them nor persecute them; we are neither to oppress nor ridicule them; we are neither to look upon them with haughty scorn nor with callous indifference;—but while we set ourselves against their errors, we are to pity them with unaffected compassion, and to labour for their conversion with disinterested kindness. We are to bear, with unruffled meekness, all their provoking sarcasms; and to sustain, with deep humility, the consciousness of our clearer perceptions; and to convince them that, with the steadiest resistance of their principles, we unite the tenderest concern for their persons.

And, if charity do not imply indifference to religious opinions, so neither does it mean *connivance at sin.* There are some persons whose views of the evil of sin are so dim and contracted, or their good nature is so accommodating and unscriptural, that they make all

kinds of excuses for men's transgressions, and allow of any latitude that is asked, for human frailty. The greatest sins, if they are not committed against the laws of society, are reduced to the mere infirmities of our fallen nature, which should not be visited with harsh censure; and as for the lesser ones, they are mere specks upon a bright and polished surface, which nothing but a most fastidious precision would ever notice. Such persons condemn, as sour and rigid ascetics, all who oppose and condemn iniquity; revile them as uniting in a kind of malignant opposition to the cheerfulness of society, the very dregs of puritanism and barbarism; and reproach them as being destitute of all the charities and courtesies of life. But if candour be a confounding of the distinctions between sin and holiness, a depreciating of the excellence of the latter, and at the same time a diminishing of the evil of the former; if it necessarily lead us to connive with an easy and goodnatured air at iniquity, and to smile with a kind and gentle aspect upon the transgressions which we witness;—then it must be something openly at variance with the letter and the spirit of revelation: and surely that candour which runs counter to the mind of God, cannot be the love on which St. Paul passes such an elogium in this chapter. We are told by the word of God, that sin is exceedingly sinful; that it is the abominable thing which God hates; that the wages of it are death; that by an unholy *feeling* we violate the law: we are commanded to abstain from its very appearance; we are warned against excusing it in ourselves, or in each other; we are admonished to reprove it, to resist it, and to oppose it, to the uttermost. Certainly, then, it cannot be required by the law of love, that we should look with a mild and tolerant eye on sin. Love to man arises out of love to God; but can it be possible to love God, and not to hate sin? it is the fruit of faith, but faith purifies the heart; it is cherished by a sense of redeeming love; but the very end of the scheme of redemption is the destruction of sin. Indulgence of men in their sins, connivance at their ini-

quity, instead of being an act of benevolence, is the greatest cruelty: hence the emphatic language of God to the Israelites—"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." Would it be benevolence to connive at that conduct by which any individual was bringing disease upon his body, or poverty into his circumstances? If not, how can it be benevolent to leave him, without a warning, to do that which will involve his soul in ruin. To think more lightly of the evil of sin than the word of God does; to call that good, or even indifferent, which by it is called evil; to make allowances, which it does not make, for human frailty; to frame excuses for sin which it disallows; to lull the consciences of men, by considerations in extenuation of guilt which it forbids; or to do any thing to produce other views and feelings in reference to iniquity, than such as are warranted by the Scripture,—is not charity, but a participation in other men's sins.

It is the nature of charity, I admit, not to be hasty to impute evil motives to actions of a doubtful nature; not to take pleasure in finding out the faults of others; not to magnify them beyond the reality, but to make all the allowance that a regard to truth will admit of; to hope the best in the absence of proof; and to be willing to forgive the offence when it has been committed against ourselves: but to carry it beyond this, and let it degenerate into a complaisance which is afraid to rebuke, or oppose, or condemn sin, lest we should offend the transgressor, or violate the law of courtesy, or subject ourselves to the reproach of being a censorious bigot; which courts the good-will and promotes the self-satisfaction of others, by conniving at their sins; which seeks to ingratiate itself in their affections, by being indulgent to their vices;—is to violate at once the law both of the first and of the second Table; is to forget every obligation which we are laid under, both to love God and our neighbour. If this be candour, it is no less opposed to piety than to hu-

manity, and can never be the love enjoined in so many places in the New Testament. No: Christian charity is not a poor old dotard, creeping about the world, too blind to perceive the distinction between good and evil; or a fawning sycophant, too timid to reprove the bold transgressor, and smiling with parasitical and imbecile complacency upon the errors and iniquities of the human race;—but a vigorous and healthy virtue, with an eye keen to discern the boundaries between right and wrong, a hand strong and ready to help the transgressor out of his miserable condition, a heart full of mercy for the sinner and the sufferer; a disposition to forgive rather than to revenge, to extenuate rather than to aggravate, to conceal rather than to expose, to be kind rather than severe, to be hopeful of good rather than suspicious of evil,—but withal, the inflexible, immutable friend of holiness, and the equally inflexible and immutable enemy of sin.

We are not allowed, it is true, to be scornful and proud towards the wicked, nor censorious towards any; we are not to make the most distant approach to the temper which says, "Stand by, I am holier than thou!" we are not to hunt for the failings of others, nor, when we see them without hunting for them, to condemn them in a tone of arrogance, or with a spirit of acerbity; but still we must maintain that temper which, while it reflects the beauty of a God of love, no less brightly reflects his glory as a God of holiness and a God of truth.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INDISPENSABLE NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN LOVE

A DISTINCTION has been introduced into the subject of religion, which, although not wholly free from objection, is sufficient to answer the purpose for which it is employed; I mean that which exists between essentials and non-essentials. It would be a difficult task to trace the boundary line by which these classes are divided; but the truth of the general idea cannot be questioned—that there are some things, both in faith and practice, which, for want of perceiving the grounds of their obligation, we may neglect, and yet not be destitue of true religion; while there are others, the absence of which necessarily implies an unrenewed heart. Among the essentials of true piety, must be reckoned the disposition we are now considering. It is not to be classed with those observances and views which, though important, are not absolutely essential to salvation: we must possess it, or we are not Christians now, and shall not be admitted into heaven hereafter. The Apostle has expressed this necessity in the clearest and the strongest manner. He has put a hypothetical case of the most impressive kind, which I shall now illustrate.

"*Though I speak with the tongues of men or of angels, and have not* CHARITY, *I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.*"—Verse 1.

By the tongues of men and of angels, we are not to understand the powers of the loftiest eloquence, but the miraculous gift of tongues, accompanied by an ability to convey ideas according to the method of celestial beings. Should a man be invested with these stupendous endowments, and employ them in the service of the Gospel; still, if his heart were not a partaker of love, he would be no more acceptable to God, than was the clangor of the brazen instruments employed in the idolatrous worship of the Egyptian Isis, or the noise of the tinkling cymbals which accompanied the orgies of the Grecian Cybele. Such a man's profession of religion is not only *worthless* in the sight of God, but disagreeable and disgusting. The comparison is remarkably strong, inasmuch as it refers not to soft melodious sounds, as of the flute or of the harp —not to the harmonious chords of a concert,—but to the harsh dissonance of instruments of the most inharmonious character: and if, as is probable, the allusion be to the noisy clank of *idolatrous* musicians, the idea is as strongly presented as it is possible for the force of language to express it.

"*And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not* CHARITY, *I am nothing.*"—Verse 2.

Paul still alludes to miraculous endowments. Prophecy, in the Scripture use of the term, is not limited to the foretelling of future events, but means, to speak by inspiration of God; and its exercise, in this instance, refers to the power of explaining, without premeditation or mistake, the typical and predictive parts of the Old Testament dispensation, together with the facts and doctrines of the Christian economy. "The faith that could remove mountains," is an allusion to an expression of our Lord's, which occurs in the Gospel history. "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as

a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove." This faith is of a distinct nature altogether from that by which men are justified, and become the children of God. It has been called the faith of miracles, and seems to have consisted in a firm persuasion of the power or ability of God to do any miraculous thing for the support of the Gospel. It operated two ways: the first was a belief on the part of the person who wrought the miracle, that he was the subject of a divine impulse, and called at that time to perform such an act; and the other was a belief on the part of the person on whom a miracle was about to be performed, that such an affect would be really produced. Now the Apostle declared, that although a man had been gifted with prophecy, so as to explain the deepest mysteries of the Jewish or the Christian systems, and, in addition, possessed that miraculous faith by which the most difficult and astonishing changes would have been effected,—he was nothing, and less than nothing, without love.

"*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not* CHARITY, *it profiteth me nothing.*"—Verse 3.

This representation of the indispensable necessity of love is most striking; it supposes it possible that a man may distribute all his substance in acts of apparent beneficence, and yet, after all, be without true religion. Actions derive their moral character from the motives under the influence of which they are performed; and many which are beneficial to man, may still be sinful in the sight of God, because they are not done from a right inducement. The most diffusive liberality, if prompted by pride, vanity, or self-righteousness, is of no value in the eyes of the omniscient Jehovah; on the contrary, it is very sinful. And is it not too evident to be questioned, that many of the almsdeeds of which we are the witnesses, are done from any motives but the right ones? We can readily imagine that multitudes are lavish in their pecuniary contribu-

tions, who are at the same time totally destitute of love to God and love to man; and if destitute of these sacred virtues, they are, as it respects real religion, less than nothing, although they should spend every farthing of their property in relieving the wants of the poor. If our munificence, however great or self-denying, be the operation of mere selfish regard to ourselves, to our own reputation, or to our own safety, and not of pure love, it may do good to others, but will do none to ourselves. "And though I give my body to be burned," *i. e.* as a martyr for religion, "and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Whether such a case as this ever existed, we know not; it is not impossible, nor improbable; but if it did, not the tortures of an agonizing death, nor the courage that endured them, nor the seeming zeal for religion which led to them, would be accepted in lieu of love to man. Such an instance of self-devotedness must have been the result either of that self-righteousness which substitutes its own sufferings for those of Christ, or of that love of fame which scruples not to seek it even in the fires of martyrdom; —in either case it partakes not of the nature, nor will receive the reward, of true religion. It will help to convince us, not only of the necessity, but of the importance, of this temper of mind, if we bring into a narrow compass the many and various representations of it which are to be found in the New Testament.

1. *It is the object of the Divine decree in predestination.* "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."—Ephes. i. 4.

2. *It is the end and purpose of the moral law.* "The end of the commandment is charity (love.") "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."—Matt. xxii. 37—40. "Love is the fulfilling of the law."

3. *It is the evidence of regeneration.* "Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God."—1 John iv. 7.

4. *It is the necessary operation and effect of saving faith.* "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."

5. *It is that grace by which both personal and mutual edification is promoted.* "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity (love) edifieth."—1 Cor. viii. 1.—"Maketh increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love."—Eph. iv. 16.

6. *It is the proof of a mutual inhabitation between God and his people.* "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."—1 John iv. 12—16.

7. *It is declared to be the greatest of all the Christian virtues.* "The greatest of these is charity (love.")

8. *It is represented as the perfection of religion.* "Above all these things, put on charity (love,) which is the bond of perfectness."—Col. iii. 4.

What encomiums are these! what striking proofs of the supreme importance of the disposition now under consideration! Who has not been guilty of some neglect of it? Who has not had his attention drawn too much from it? Who can read these passages of Holy Writ, and not feel convinced that not only mankind in general, but the professors of spiritual religion also, have too much mistaken the nature of true piety? What are clear and orthodox views—what are strong feelings—what is our faith—what our enjoyment—what our freedom from gross immorality,—without this spirit of pure and universal benevolence?

Whether an instance, we again repeat, ever existed of an individual whose circumstances answered to the supposition of the Apostle, we cannot determine; the

statement certainly suggests to us a most alarming idea of our liability to self-deception in reference to our personal religion. Delusion on this subject prevails to an extent truly appalling. Millions are in error as to the real condition of their souls, and are travelling to perdition, while, according to their own idea, they are journeying to the celestial Canaan. Oh fearful mistake! Oh fatal imposture! What terrible disappointment awaits them! What horror, and anguish, and despair, will take eternal possession of their souls, in that moment of revelation, when, instead of awaking from the sleep of death amidst the glories of the heavenly city, they shall lift up their eyes, "being in torment." No pen can describe the overwhelming anguish of such a disappointment, and the imagination shrinks with amazement and torture from the contemplation of her own faint sketch of the insupportable scene.

To be led on by the power of delusion, so far as to commit an error of consequence to our *temporal* interests; to have impaired our health, our reputation, or our property;—is sufficiently painful, especially where there is no prospect, or but a faint one, of repairing the mischief: yet, in this case, religion opens a balm for the wounded spirit, and eternity presents a prospect, where the sorrows of time will be forgotten. But, oh! to be in error on the nature of religion itself, and to build our hopes of immortality on the sand instead of the rock; to see the lamp of our deceitful profession, which had served to amuse us in life, and even to guide us in false peace through the dark valley of the shadow of death, suddenly extinguished as we cross the threshold of eternity, and leaving us amidst the darkness of rayless, endless night, instead of quietly expiring amidst the blaze of everlasting day! Is such a delusion *possible?* Has it ever happened in *one* solitary instance? Do the annals of the unseen world record one such case, and the prison of lost souls contain one miserable spirit that perished by delusion? Then what deep solicitude ought the *possibility* of such an event

to circulate through the hearts of all, to avoid the error of a self-deceived mind? Is it possible to be mistaken in our judgment of our state?—then how deeply anxious ought we all to feel, not to be misled by false criteria in forming our decision. But what if, instead of *one* case, millions should have occurred, of souls irrecoverably lost by self-deception? What if delusion should be the most crowded avenue to the bottomless pit? What if it should be the common infatuation, the epidemic blindness, which has fallen upon the multitudes of the inhabitants of Christendom? What if this moral insanity should have infected and destroyed very many who have made even a stricter profession of religion than others? How shall we explain, much more justify, that want of anxiety about their everlasting welfare—that destitution of care to examine into the nature and evidences of true piety—that willingness to be imposed upon, in reference to eternity—which many exhibit? Jesus Christ *does* tell us that MANY, in that day, shall say, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in thy name?" to whom he will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity." He says, that "MANY are called, but few chosen." He says, that of the four classes of those who hear the word, only *one* hears it to advantage. He says, that of the ten virgins, to whom he likens the kingdom of heaven, *five* only were wise, while the other five were deceiving themselves with the unfed lamp of a deceitful profession. He intimates most plainly, that self-deception in religion is fearfully common—and common amongst those who make a more serious profession than others. It is *he* that has sounded the alarm to awaken slumbering professors of religion from their carnal security. It is *he* that hath said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."—"I know thy works, how that thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead." How careful, then, ought we to be, not to be imposed upon by false evidences of religion, and not to conclude that we are Christians, while we are destitute of those things which

the word of God declares to be essential to genuine piety. We must have love, therefore, or all else is insufficient.

1. Some conclude, that because *they are regular in their attendance upon the services of religion*, they are true Christians: they go punctually to church or to meeting—they receive the Lord's Supper—they frequent the meetings for social prayer—they, perhaps, repeat prayers in secret, and read the Scriptures. All this is well, if it be done with right views, and in connexion with right dispositions: but it is the whole of their religion; a mere abstraction of devotional exercise; a thing separate and apart from the heart, and temper, and conduct; a business of the closet, and of the sanctuary; a sort of composition paid to the Almighty, to be released from all the other demands of Scripture and obligations of piety; an expression of their willingness to be devout in the church, and on the Sabbath, provided they may be as earthly-minded, as selfish, as malicious, and as unkind, as they please, in all places and all times besides. *This* is not religion.

2. *Others are depending upon the clearness of their views, and their attainments in evangelical knowledge.* They pretend to a singular zeal for the truth, and are great sticklers for the doctrines of grace, of which they profess to have an acquaintance little short of inspiration. They look upon all, besides a few of their own class, as mere babes in knowledge, or as individuals who, like the man in the Gospel, have their eyes only half opened, and who see, "men as trees walking." They are the eagles who soar to the sun, and bask in his beams; while the rest of mankind are the moles that burrow, and the bats that flutter in the dark. Doctrine is everything; clear views of the Gospel are the great desideratum; and in their zeal for these things, they suppose they can never say things extravagant enough, nor absurd enough, nor angry enough, against good works, practical religion, or Christian temper. Puffed up with pride, selfish, unkind, irritable, censorious, malicious,—they manifest a total want of that hu-

mility and kindness which are the prominent features of true Christianity. Clear views, even where they have no resemblance to the monstrous caricatures and frightful deformities of modern Antinomianism, are of themselves no evidence of religion, any more than right theoretical notions of the constitution are the proofs of loyalty; and as a man, with these notions in his mind, may be a traitor in his heart, so may a professor of religion be an enemy to God in his soul, with an evangelical creed upon his tongue. Many profess to be very fond of the lamp of truth, grasp it firmly in their hands, admire its flame, pity or blame those who are following the delusive and meteoric fires of error; but, after all, make no other use of it, than to illuminate the path that leads them to perdition: their religion begins and ends in adopting a form of sound words for their creed, approving an evangelical ministry, admiring the popular champions of the truth, and joining in the reprobation of fundamental error. As to any spirituality of mind, any heavenliness of affection, any Christian love—in short, as to any of the natural tendency, the appropriate energy, the vital elevating influence, of those very doctrines to which they profess to be attached—they are as destitute as the veriest worldling; and, like him, are perhaps selfish, revengeful, implacable, and unkind. This is a religion but too common in the present day, when evangelical sentiments are becoming increasingly popular; a religion but too common in our churches; a religion, cold, heartless, and uninfluential; a sort of lunar light, which reflects the beams of the sun, but not his warmth.

3. On the other hand, *some are satisfied with the vividness and the violence of their feelings.* Possessed of much excitability and warmth of temperament, they are, of course, susceptible of deep and powerful impression from the ordinances of religion. They are not without their religious joy, for even the stony ground hearers rejoiced for a while; and they are not without their religious sorrows. Their tears are plentiful, and their smiles in proportion. See them in the

house of God, and none appear to feel more under the word than they. The sermon exerts a plastic power over their affections, and the preacher seems to have their hearts at command. They talk loudly of "happy frames," "precious seasons," "comfortable opportunities." But follow them from the house of God to their own habitation, and, oh, how changed the scene!—the least offence, perhaps an unintentional one, raises a storm of passion, and the man that looked like a seraph in the sanctuary, seems more like a fury at home: follow them from the Sabbath into the days of the week; and you will see the man who appeared all for heaven on the Sunday, all for earth on the Monday: follow them from the assembly of the saints to the chief places of concourse, where they buy, and sell, and get gain; and you will see the man who looked so devout, irritated and litigious, selfish and overreaching, rude and insulting, envious and malicious, suspicious and defamatory. Yes; and perhaps in the evening of the same day, you will see him at a prayer meeting, enjoying, as he supposes, the holy season. Such is the delusion under which many are living. *Their* religion is, in great part, a mere susceptibility of impression from religious subjects; it is a selfish, religious voluptuousness.

It is certain, that more importance is oftentimes attached to "sensible enjoyment," as it is called—to lively frames and feelings—than belongs to them. There is a great variety in the constitution of the human mind, not only as it respects the power of thinking, but also of feeling: some feel far more acutely than others; this is observable separate and apart from godliness. The grace of God in conversion, operates a *moral*, not a physical, change; it gives a new direction to the faculties, but leaves the faculties *themselves* as they were; consequently, with equal depth of conviction, and equal strength of principle, there will be various degrees of feeling, in different persons: the susceptibility of the mind to impression, and its lia-

bility to vivid feeling, were there before conversion, and they remain after it; and oftentimes the lively emotion produced by affecting scenes, or seasons, or sermons, is partly an operation of nature, and partly of grace. A man may feel but little, and yet, if that little lead him to do much, it is great piety notwithstanding. Of two persons who listen to an affecting tale, one is seen to weep profusely, and is overwhelmed by the story; the other is attentive and thoughtful, but neither weeps nor sobs. They retire: the former, perhaps, to wipe her tears, and to forget the misery which caused them; the latter to seek out the sufferer, and relieve him. Which had most feeling? The former. Which most benevolence? The latter. The conduct of one was the result of nature, that of the other the effect of principle. Take another illustration, still more in point. Conceive of two real Christians listening to a sermon in which the preacher is discoursing from such a text as this—"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another;" or this—"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye, through his poverty might be rich." His object, as that of every man should be, who preaches from such a text, is to show that a sense of divine love to *us*, should fill *us* with benevolence towards others. In order to bring the heart to feel its obligations, he gives a vivid description of God's love to man; and then, while his hearers are affected with God's mercy he calls upon them, in imitation of Jehovah, to relieve those who are in want; to bear with those who are vexatious; to forgive those who have injured them; to lay aside their wrath, and abound in all the expressions of genuine affection to their fellow-christians. One of the individuals is deeply interested and affected by the first part of the discourse, sheds many tears, and is wrought up to a high pitch of feeling, while the preacher paints in glowing colours the love of God: the other hears with fixed attention, with genuine faith, the *whole* ser-

mon, but his emotions are not powerful; he feels it is true, but it is tranquil feeling, unattended by either smiles or tears. They go home; the latter perhaps in silence, the former exclaiming to his friends, "Oh, what a delightful sermon! what a precious season! did you ever hear the love of God so impressively, so beautifully, described?" With all his feeling, however, he does not go forth to relieve one child of want, nor does he attempt to extinguish one angry or implacable feeling towards an individual who had offended him. He is as passionate and unforgiving, as unkind and selfish, after the sermon, as he was before he heard it. The other retires with more of calm reflection than of strong emotion. Hearken to his soliloquy:—"The preacher has given us a most astonishing idea of the love of God to us, and most clearly and affectingly deduced from it our obligations to love one another. Am *I* interested in this love? What! has this ineffable grace lavished all its benefits on *me*, a rebel against God, upon *me* a sinner? And shall *I* not feel this love constraining me to relieve the wants, to heal the sorrows, to forgive the offences, of my fellow-creatures? I will bear ill will no longer; I will put out the kindling spark of revenge; I will go in a spirit of meekness and of love, and forgive the offender, and be reconciled to my brother." By that grace on which he depended, he is enabled to act up to his resolution. He becomes, upon principle, upon conviction, more merciful, more meek, more affectionate. Which has most feeling? The former. Which has most religion? The latter.

Any emotion, however pleasurable or intense, that does not lead to action, is mere natural, not holy, feeling: while that, however feeble it may seem, which leads us to do the will of God, is unfeigned piety. In order to ascertain our degree of religion, we must not merely ask, how we feel under sermons, but how this feeling leads us to act afterwards. The operative strength of our principles, and not the contemplative strength of our feelings, is the test of godliness. All

that imaginative emotion, produced by a sense of God's love to us, which does not lead to a cultivation of the virtue considered in this treatise, is one of the delusive fires, which, instead of guiding aright, misleads the souls of men.

4. It is to be feared that many, in the present day, satisfy themselves that they are Christians, *because of their zeal in the cause of religion.* Happily for the church of God, happily for the world at large, there is now a great and general eagerness for the diffusion of knowledge and piety. Throwing off the torpor of ages, the friends of Christ are labouring to extend his kingdom in every direction. Almost every possible object of Christian philanthropy is seized upon; societies are organized; means, adapted to every kind of instruments, are employed; the whole levy *en masse* of the religious world is called out; and Christendom presents an interesting scene of benevolent energy. Such a state of things, however, has its dangers in reference to personal religion, and may become an occasion of delusion to many. It does not require genuine piety to associate us with these movements: from a natural liberality of disposition, or regard to reputation, or a desire of influence, or by the compulsion of example, we may give our property; for all these motives are no doubt in partial operation, when giving is in fashion. And as to personal exertions, how many inducements may lead to this, besides a sincere and an ardent love to Christ; an inherent fondness for activity, a love of display, the spirit of party, the persuasion of friends, —may all operate, and unquestionably do operate, in many cases, to produce astonishing efforts in the cause of religious benevolence, where there is a total absence of genuine piety. The mind of man, prone to self-deception, and anxious to find some reasons to satisfy itself in reference to its eternal state, short of the true evidence of a renewed heart, is too apt to derive a false peace from the contemplation of its zeal. In proportion as the cause of the delusion approximates to the nature of true religion, is its power to blind and to

mislead the judgment. If the mind can perceive any thing in itself, or in its operations, which bears the semblance of godliness, it will convert it into a means of lulling the conscience and removing anxiety. This is to many persons the fatal opiate, the soul-destroying imposture—their activity in the cause of Christian zeal: none are more diligent in their devotedness to the duties of committees, none are more constant in their attendance upon public meetings; others, again, weary themselves in their weekly rounds to collect the contributions of the rich or the offerings of the poor. These things, if they do not lead them coolly to reason and to conclude that they are believers, take off their attention from the real condition of their souls, leave them no leisure for reflection, repress the rising fear, and either stifle the voice of conscience, or enable them to drown its remonstrances in the eloquence of the platform, or in the discussions of the committee-room. We doubt not that some unworthy professors of religion, in the present age, resort to public meetings for the same reason as many a guilty votary of pleasure does to public amusements—to forget his own condition, and to turn away his ear, for a short season, from the voice that speaks to him from within. Individuals are known to us all, who, amidst the greatest zeal for various public institutions, are living in malice and all uncharitableness, in the indulgence of a predominant selfishness, and uncontrolled wrath. But it will not do. This is not piety. Could we support the whole expenditure of the Missionary Society by our affluence, and direct its councils by our wisdom, and keep alive its energy by our ardour, and yet at the same time were destitute of love,—we should perish eternally, amidst the munificence of our liberality.

And of those who *have* the grace of love, and who are real believers, some are far more deficient in its influence and activity than they should be; and endeavour to quiet an accusing conscience with the wretched sophistry, "that as a Christian cannot be supposed to excel in every thing, their forte lies in the *active* virtues

of religion more than in the *passive* graces; and that, therefore, any little deficiency in the latter is made up by their greater abundance of the former." This reasoning is as false in its principle, as it is frequent, we fear, in its adoption. Where, in all the word of God, is this species of moral composition of duties taught or sanctioned? This is really carrying the popish principle of indulgences into our own private concerns, and creating a surplus stock of one virtue to be available for the deficiencies of another.

It is to be apprehended, that as every age is marked with a peculiar tendency, either to some prevailing error or defect, the tendency of the present age is to exalt the *active* virtues of piety, at the expense of the *passive* ones; and, while the former are forced into an increasing luxuriance, to permit the latter to wither in their shade; or, at least, there is a disposition to devote all that time and attention to the culture of one which ought to be shared between both. It cannot be denied that our love of activity and of display will generally incline us to prefer the cultivation of public spirit, rather than the more private and self-denying tempers of meekness, humility, and forbearance; for it is inconceivably more easy, and more pleasant, to float upon the tide of public feeling towards the objects of religious zeal, than to wade against the stream of our own corrupt tendencies, and to accomplish an end which he only who seeth in secret will duly appreciate.

5. May it not be said, that in many cases a PROFESSION *of religion* seems to release individuals from all obligation to cultivate the dispositions which it necessarily implies; who, instead of deriving from this circumstance a stimulus to seek after the Christian temper, find in it a reason for general negligence?

They have been admitted as members of a church, and have thus received, as it were, a certificate of personal religion; and, instead of being anxious from that moment to excel in every virtue that can adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour, they sink into carelessness and lukewarmness. A profession of religion, un-

supported by Christian love, will only increase our guilt here, and sink us immeasurably lower in the bottomless pit hereafter. Wo, eternal wo, will be upon that man who bears the name of our Lord Jesus without his image. Wo, eternal wo, will be upon those members of our churches, who are content to find their way into the fellowship of the faithful, without adding to their character the lustre of this sacred virtue.

Thus have we shown how many things there are, which, though good in themselves, when performed from right motives and in connexion with other parts of religion, cannot, in the absence of love, be depended upon as unequivocal evidences of personal piety. Let us beware of self-deception in this awfully important business; for it will be dreadful beyond the power of imagination to conceive of, to find ourselves the next moment after death, amidst the horrors of the infernal pit, instead of the felicities of the celestial city. Love is required by God, as an essential part of true religion; and the total absence of it as necessarily prevents a man from being a true Christian, as the want of temperance or purity. Besides, this is the temper of heaven; this is the unvarying state of mind in the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect; this is the heart of Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and the image of God the Judge of all. Without this, there would be no meetness for the society of paradise, no fitness for an association of which the bond of fellowship is love; without this there can be no grace here, and, therefore, no glory hereafter.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE PROPERTIES OF CHRISTIAN LOVE, AS STATED BY THE APOSTLE.

By a beautiful personification, the Apostle has described this grace under the figure of an interesting female, who, like an angel of light, lifts her cherubic form and smiling countenance amidst the children of men; shedding, as she passes along, a healing influence on the wounds of society, hushing the notes of discord, driving before her the spirits of mischief, bringing the graces in her train, and converting earth into a resemblance of heaven. Her charms are sufficient to captivate every heart, if every heart were as it should be; and her influence such as every mind should court. "Love suffereth long, and is kind: love envieth not: love vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."

1. The first remark which I make on these properties, is, *that they describe such expressions of our love as have a particular reference to our* TEMPER.

By the temper, we mean the prevailing spirit and disposition of the mind, as it respects the irascible or selfish affections. If we examine, we shall find that all the qualities here enumerated, bear on these dispositions. There are other operations and manifestations of charity, beside those which are here specified—such, for in-

stance, as justice, and chastity; for it is impossible to love mankind, and violate the rules of either of these duties: but the apostle restricts his specification to those properties of it, which are comprehended in the word *temper*. Nothing, surely, can teach more clearly, or more impressively, the great truth,—that religion must govern the temper,—than this chapter. It is strange, but true, that many seem to think that temper is that part of a man's self and conduct, over which religion has no legal jurisdiction. They admit their obligations to be holy, and moral, and devout; but they do not feel, at least do not acknowledge, that it is their duty to be meek, gentle, and kind. They may not affirm so much in words, but it is the secret and tacit system of conduct which they have adopted. Hence it is, that although they are correct in their morals, and regular in their attendance on the means of grace, they are withal so apt to receive offence, and so forward to give it; they are either so passionate, or so sullen; so implacable or revengeful;—that the real excellences of their character are lost sight of in the deep shadow of their infirmities, and the ways of godliness are spoken ill of on their account. This arises from their not being sufficiently convinced of the evil of such infirmities; and this blindness itself is the consequence of a supposition, that the removal of the evil is physically impossible. "Our temper," say they, "is as much a part of ourselves, as the colour of our skin, or the conformation of our body; it is naturally inherent in us, and we cannot help it." As long as this is the conviction of the judgment, or the admission of a deceitful heart, it is almost vain to hope for a reformation. But let us reason with such persons.

It must be admitted, that there do exist constitutional tendencies to the exercise of particular passions: without being able to account for these effects, or whether the cause be wholly in the body or partly in the mind, the effects are too obvious to be denied. Nay, these constitutional tendencies are no less hereditary, sometimes, than direct physical disease. One man is naturally propense to passion; another to sullenness; a

third to envy; a fourth to pride: all this is indisputable. But these tendencies are not uncontroulable: they are impulses, but not constraints; incitements, but not compulsions. It would subvert the whole system of moral obligation, to suppose that we were under a physical necessity of sinning, which we certainly should be, if inherent tendencies were beyond the power of moral restraint. That cannot be duty, which a man could not do if he would; nor can that be sin, which he cannot avoid by any exercise of disposition or will. If, therefore, we cannot help indulging revenge, envy, pride, unkindness, they are no sins: and, in this case would such vices have been condemned, if there were an impossibility in the way of avoiding them? Certainly not. It is no actual sin to have the liability; the guilt consists in indulging it.

If the existence of constitutional propensities be an excuse for their indulgence, the *licentious* man may plead it in justification of his sensuality; for he may have stronger incitements to his besetting sin, than many others who run not to the same excess of riot. But if licentiousness or cruelty cannot be excused on this ground, why should anger, revenge, or envy! Once let it be granted, that physical tendency is an excuse for any kind of sinful indulgence, no matter of what kind, and you at once overturn the whole system of Christian morals.

Besides, natural propensities, of the most impetuous kinds, have been, in innumerable instances, not only successfully resisted, but almost entirely vanquished. We have known persons, who were once addicted to all kinds of impure gratifications, but who have become as distinguished for chastity as they once were for lewdness; drunkards have become sober; men as furious as enraged tigers, have become gentleness itself. It is said of that eminently holy and useful man, Mr. Fletcher, of Madely, that "He was meek, like his Master, as well as lowly in heart. Not that he was so by nature, but a man of strong passions, and prone to anger in particular; insomuch that he has frequently

spent the greater part of the night bathed in tears, imploring victory over his own spirit. And he did not strive in vain. He did obtain the victory in a very eminent degree. Yea, so thoroughly had grace subdued nature; so fully was he renewed in the spirit of his mind;—that for many years before his death, I believe he was never observed by any one, friend or foe, to be out of temper on any provocation whatever. The testimony that Bishop Burnet bears of Archbishop Leighton, might be borne of him with equal propriety. After an intimate acquaintance with the Archbishop for many years, and after being with him by night and by day, at home and abroad, in public and in private; I must say, I never heard an idle word drop from his lips; I never saw him in any temper, in which I myself would not have wished to be found at death." What a character! What a testimony! But it is not the beauty, the inexpressible moral loveliness of it alone, which should be remarked, but the convincing proof which it furnishes, that a naturally bad temper may be subdued. Many instances of this kind have existed, which accumulate accusation and reproach upon the man who indulges in a sinful, constitutional tendency of any kind, under the mistaken idea, that it is not only absolutely invincible, but altogether irresistible.

That every thing which pertains to our *physical* nature will remain after our conversion, is true, for grace produces no change in the bodily organization; and that occasional ebullitions of inherent natural temper will occur in our renewed state, is allowed, for very few attain to Mr. Fletcher's eminence of piety; but if we are as passionate and revengeful, as proud and envious, as selfish and unkind, as we were before our supposed conversion, we may be assured that it is but a *supposed* conversion. It is nothing, that we go regularly to worship—it is nothing, that we feel under sermons—it is nothing, that we have holy frames and feelings; for a heart under the predominant influence of irascible passions, can no more have undergone the change of the new birth, than one that is filled with a prevailing

lasciviousness: and where the heart *is* renewed, and the badness of the temper is not constant, but only occasional—is not regnant, but only prominent,—it is, in so far as it prevails, a deduction from real piety.

True it is, that inherent natural tendency will require more vigorous resistance and unsleeping vigilance, more laborious effort, more painful mortification, more earnest prayer, on the part of those who are conscious of it, than is necessary on theirs in whom it does not exist. It is not uncommon for such persons to be contented with a few feeble struggles, and then to flatter themselves with the idea that there is more grace displayed in those efforts than in the conduct of others, who, being naturally good tempered, are never exposed to *their* temptations. To adorn religion, will certainly cost them far more labour than it does those of a better natural temper; just as a man afflicted with a weakly constitution, or a chronic disease, must take more pains with himself than one who has sound health—and he will, after all, look more sickly than the other; but as his bodily malady does exist, he must give himself this trouble, or he cannot rationally expect the least share of health: so it is with the soul, if the disease of an evil temper be there, immense and unwearied pains must be taken to resist and repress it. This is what is meant by our "plucking out a right eye, or cutting off a right hand;" by "denying ourselves;" by "mortifying the deeds of the body;" by "the spirit struggling against the flesh;" by "casting aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset us." The subjection of our temper to the controul of religion, is a thing which *must be done*. It is that to which we must apply, as to a matter of indispensable necessity; it is an object which we must accomplish by any mortification of feeling, and by any expenditure of labour. The virtues which we are about to consider, will spring up in no soil without culture; but there are some soils peculiarly unfriendly to their growth, and in which productions of an opposite kind thrive spontaneously, and grow with frightful luxuriance: with these greater

pains must be taken, and greater patience exercised, till at length the beautiful imagery of the prophet shall be realized—" Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

But for effecting such a transformation, there must be a degree of labour and painstaking, which very few are willing to endure: " This kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting."

To obtain this victory over ourselves, much time must be spent in the closet—much communion with God must be maintained—much strong crying with tears must be poured forth. We must undergo what the apostle calls, by a term very appropriate, as well as strikingly descriptive, a " crucifixion;"—" we must *crucify* the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof;"—" we must keep," or as the word signifies, " *beat under* our body;"—we must bring our mind, from time to time, under the influence of redeeming grace;—we must ascend the hill of Calvary, and gaze upon that scene of love, till our cold hearts melt, our hard hearts soften, and all the cruel selfishness of our nature relaxes into gentleness;—we must make all the doctrines of the Gospel, with all the motives they contain, bear upon our nature: the example of the meek and lowly Jesus must be contemplated, and admired, and copied; and especially, after all, must we breathe forth internal longings for the influence of the Holy Ghost, without whose aid our souls will no more yield to the influence of motives than the polar ice will melt by the feeble beams of the great northern constellation. We must pray for the Spirit; long for the Spirit; expect the Spirit; live, walk, struggle, in the Spirit. Thus must we *set ourselves to work* to obtain more of that love, which alone can subdue our evil temper.

2. *The properties here enumerated are* ALL *included in love, and must* ALL *be sought by every real Christian.*

The general disposition includes all these particular and distinct operations, and opposes all these separate

evils: it is as much opposed to envy as to revenge, and is as humble as it is kind. Consequently, we are not to select for ourselves such modes of its operation as we may think most adapted to our taste and to our circumstances—giving to these all our attention, and neglecting the rest. One is not to say, "I am most inclined to kindness, and I shall cherish this property, which I find to be more easy and pleasant than to cultivate humility and meekness." Another is not to say, "I find no great difficulty in forgiving injuries, and I shall practise this; but as for envy, I am so propense to it, that I shall give up all attempts to eradicate this weed from my heart." This parcelling out of the disposition, and selecting that part which is most congenial to our constitutional tendency, will not do. Yet is the attempt made by many, who, to appease, in some measure, the clamorous importunity of their conscience, and at the same time to avoid the obligations of benevolence as a whole, thus impose upon themselves with a supposed attention to some partial view of the subject. They carry on a wretched and useless attempt to balance those points in which they succeed against those in which they fail; their excellences against their defects. It may be said, in reference to this law of our duty, as well as to the still more comprehensive one, that "He that offendeth but in one point is guilty of all;" for that authority which saith, "Be ye kind," saith also, "Thou shalt not think evil of thy neighbour." These amiable properties must go together; the general principle which comprises them must be taken as a whole. It is one and indivisible, and as such must be received by us. "Charity is the bond of perfectness." Like the band round the sheaf, it holds all the separate ears together. Instead, therefore, of allowing ourselves to select, we must open our hearts to its whole and undivided influence; and if, indeed, there be any one of its properties in which we are more than ordinarily deficient, to that one we must direct a still greater portion of our attention.

3. These properties *are perfectly homogeneous.* They are of the same nature, and are, therefore, helpful to

each other. In reality, if we cultivate one, we are preparing the way for others. There is no contrariety of influence, no discordant operation, no clashing demands. When we are rooting up one evil by love, we drag up others with it: when we subdue pride, we weaken our susceptibility of offence: when we cherish kindness, we impoverish selfishness. This is an immense advantage in the cultivation of the Christian temper; and it shows us that if there be one besetting sinful propensity in the heart, it draws all the energy of the mind to itself, and throws a dark and chilling shadow over the whole soul. The subjugation of this one bad temper will weaken many others that depend for existence upon its support; and make way for an opposite excellence, which is as extensively beneficial as the other was injurious. This is a powerful incentive to the arduous and necessary duty of self-improvement: an evil disposition eradicated, is a good one implanted; and one good one implanted, is a way made for others to follow.

4. As these properties, *while they are separate as to their nature, all unite in a common and generic disposition, our first and chief attention must be to that which is the common principle.* These tempers are so many modes in which love operates—so many streams from a common fountain,—so many branches from the same root. While, therefore, we seek to guide the separate streams, and trim the different branches aright, our care must be exercised chiefly in reference to the parent source. We must aim steadily, and labour constantly, at the increase of love itself. We must do every thing we can to strengthen the principle of benevolence to man. In every step of our progress through the treatise before us, we must constantly keep in mind its connexion with this great master principle. The way to abound in the effects is to increase the power of the cause.

5. We are to recollect, that these properties *are to be expected only in proportion to the degree in which love itself exists in the heart.*

On reading this chapter, and seeing what is required of the Christian, and comparing it with the usual con-

duct of religious people, we feel almost involuntarily led to say, "If this be love, where then, except in heaven, is it to be found?" To this I reply, the apostle does not say that every man who pretends to this virtue acts thus; nor does he say that every one who possesses it acts thus in all instances, but that love itself does it. This is the way in which it acts, when allowed to exert its own energies; if it were suffered to have its full scope, and to bear sway in us without any check, this would be the invariable effect: our not seeing, therefore, a perfect exemplification of this principle, is no proof that it does not possess these properties, but only that *we* are imperfectly under its influence. This branch of piety, like every other, may be possessed in various degrees; and, of course, it is only in proportion as we possess the disposition that we shall manifest its operations. This should prepare us to distinguish between the utter want and the weakness of love; a distinction necessary from our proneness to despondency in reference to ourselves, and to censoriousness in reference to our neighbours.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEEKNESS OF LOVE.

"Charity suffereth long—is not easily provoked."

I CLASS these two together, because they bear a near affinity to each other. The word in the original translated "suffereth long," signifies "to have a long mind," to the end of whose patience, provocations cannot easily reach. It does not mean patience in reference to the afflictions which come from God, but to the injuries and provocations which come from man—perhaps the most correct idea which we can attach to it is, *forbearance;* a disposition which, under long continued offences, holds back anger, and is not hasty to punish or to revenge. Its kindred property, here classed with it, is nearly allied to it, "is not easily provoked," or "is not exasperated." The word signifies a violent emotion of the mind, a paroxysm of anger; so that the distinction between the two terms appears to be this,—the property intended by the latter seems to be the power of love to curb our wrath, and that intended by the former its ability to repress revenge.

There are three things which Christian love, in reference to the irascible passions, will prevent.

1. An *irritable* and *petulant* disposition. There is in some persons an excessive liability to be offended; a morbid sensibility, which is kindled to anger by the least possible injury, whether that injury be intentional or unintentional. They are all combustible, and ignite by a spark. A word, nay a look, is enough to inflame them. They are ever ready to quarrel with any, or every body; and remind us of what Cromwell said of John Lilburne, "that he was so quarrelsome, that if he could find nobody else to quarrel with, John would quarrel with Lilburne, and Lilburne with John." The whole soul seems one entire sensitiveness of offence. Instead of "suffering long," they do not suffer at all; and instead of not being easily provoked, they are provoked by anything, and sometimes by nothing. Love will prevent all this, and produce a disposition the very reverse. It is concerned for the happiness of others; and will not wantonly afflict them, and render them wretched, by such an exhibition of unlovely and unchristian temper. It will remove this diseased sensibility, and, without blunting the natural feelings, will calm this sinful excitability. Many things it will not see or hear—judging them quite beneath its dignity to notice; others it will pass by, as not of sufficient consequence to require explanation. It will keep a strict guard over its feelings, holding the rein with a tight hand. Its first business is with the disposition itself. This is important for us to notice; for if we indulge the *feeling* of anger, it will be impossible to smother the flame in our bosom; like the burning materials of a volcano, it will at length burst out in fiery eruptions. Here, then, is our first object: to gain that forbearance of disposition, which does not allow itself to be irritated or soured; to acquire that command, not only over our words and actions, but over our emotions, which shall make us patient and tranquil amidst insults and injuries—which shall keep down the temperament of the soul, and preserve the greatest coolness. Irritability, I know, is in part a physical quality; but it is in our power, by God's help to calm it. Love will make

us willing to think the best of those with whom we have to do; it will disarm us of that suspicion and mistrust, which make us regard every body as intending to injure us; will cause us to find out pleas for those who have done us harm, and when this is impossible, will lead us to pity their weakness or forgive their wickedness.

What an enemy to himself is an irritable man! He is a self-tormentor of the worst kind. He is scarcely ever at peace. His bosom is always in a state of tumult. To him the calm sunshine of the breast is unknown. A thousand petty vexations disturb his repose. Unhappy man, even though he so far succeed, as to restrain the agitations of his mind from bursting out into passion, yet has he the burning sense of torment within. Regard to his own happiness, as well as to the happiness of others, calls upon him to cultivate that love, which shall allay the inflammatory state of his mind, and restore a soundness which will not be thus wounded by every touch.

2. The next thing which love prevents, *is immoderate anger;* that anger which the apostle has described in the expression we are now elucidating, as amounting to a paroxysm of wrath; or which, in ordinary language, we call "being in a passion." It would be to oppose both reason and revelation, to assert that all anger is sin. "Be ye angry," saith the apostle, "and sin not." "A violent suppression of the natural feelings is not, perhaps, the best expedient for obviating their injurious effects; and though nothing requires a more vigilant restraint than the emotion of anger, the uneasiness of which it is productive is, perhaps, best allayed by its natural and *temperate* expression; not to say that it is a wise provision in the economy of nature, for the expression of injury and the preservation of the peace and decorum of society." A wise and temperate expression of our displeasure against injuries or offences, is by no means incompatible with Christian love; this grace intending only to check those furious sallies of our wrath, which are tormenting to ourselves and injurious to those with whom we have to do. Sinful anger

is lamentably common, and is not sufficiently subdued among the professors of religion. In cases of offence, they are too often excited to criminal degrees of passion; their countenance is flushed, their brow lowers, their eye darts indignant flashes, and their tongue pours forth loud and stormy words of reviling accusations. To diminish and prevent this disposition, let us dwell much upon the *evil consequences* of it.

It disturbs our peace, and interrupts our happiness; and this is an evil about which we ought not to be indifferent. A passionate man cannot be a happy man; he is the victim of a temper, which, like a serpent, dwells in his bosom to sting and torment him.

It destroys the comfort of *those with whom he has to do:* his children often bear the fury of the tempest; his wife has her cup of conjugal felicity embittered by the venom; his servants tremble as at the rage of a tyrant; and those with whom he transacts the business of this life dread the gusts of his passion, by which they have often been rendered uncomfortable. He is a common disturber of the circle in which he moves.

It interrupts his enjoyment of religion, brings guilt upon his conscience, and unfits him for the season and the act of communion with God. A beautiful illustration of this part of the subject may be here introduced from one of the most striking of English writers:— "Prayer is the peace of our spirit, the stillness of our thoughts, the evenness of recollection, the seat of meditation, the rest of our cares, and the calm of our tempest; prayer is the issue of a quiet mind, of untroubled thoughts; it is the daughter of charity, and the sister of meekness: and he that prays to God with an angry, that is, with a troubled and discomposed spirit, is like him that retires into a battle to meditate, and sets up his closet in the out-quarters of an army, and chooses a frontier garrison to be wise in. Anger is a perfect alienation of the mind from prayer, and, therefore, is contrary to that attention which presents our prayers in a right line to God. For so have I seen a lark rising from his bed of grass, and soaring upwards, singing

as he rises, and hopes to get to heaven, and climb above the clouds: but the poor bird was beaten back with the loud sighings of an eastern wind, and his motion made irregular and inconstant—descending more at every breath of the tempest, than it could recover by the libration and frequent weighing of his wings; till the little creature was forced to sit down and pant, and stay till the storm was over, and then it made a prosperous flight, and did rise and sing as if it had learned music and motion from an angel, as he passed sometimes through the air about his ministries here below. So is the prayer of a good man: when his affairs have required business, and his business was matter of discipline, and his discipline was to pass upon a sinning person, or had a design of charity; his duty met with the infirmities of a man, and anger was its instrument; and the instrument became stronger than the prime agent, and raised a tempest, and overruled the man; and then his prayer was broken, and his thoughts were troubled, and his words went up towards a cloud, and his thoughts pulled them back again, and made them without intention: and the good man sighs for his infirmity, but must be content to lose the prayer; and he must recover it when his anger is removed, and his spirit is becalmed—made even as the brow of Jesus and smooth as the heart of God; and then it ascends to heaven upon the wings of the holy dove, and dwells with God, till it returns, like the useful bee, laden with a blessing and the dew of heaven."*

Sinful anger dishonours religion, and causes the ways of godliness to be spoken ill of. The mists of passion envelope religion with a dense medium, through which its lustre is but dimly seen. A passionate Christian is an object of sport to the profane, a butt of ridicule to fools, whose scorn is reflected from *him* upon piety itself.

But, perhaps, it will be said, "Tell us how we may cure the disposition; its existence we admit, and its evil we know by experience, and deplore." I say, then,

* Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

Look at the disposition as it really is, attentively consider its evil nature, and trace its mischievous consequences. "Anger sets the house on fire, and all the spirits are busy upon trouble, and intend propulsion and defence, displeasure, and revenge; it is a short madness, and an eternal enemy to discourse, and sober counsels, and fair conversation; it is a fever in the heart, and a calenture in the head, and a fire in the face, and a sword in the hand, and a fury all over. It hath in it the trouble of sorrow, and the heats of lust, and the disease of revenge, and the bodings of a fever, and the rashness of precipitancy, and the disturbance of persecution. If it proceed from a great cause, it turns to fury; if from a small cause, it is peevishness: and so it is always terrible or ridiculous. It makes a man's body deformed aud contemptible, the voice horrid, the eyes cruel, the face pale or fiery, the gait fierce. It is neither manly nor ingenuous, and is a passion fitter for flies and wasps than for persons professing nobleness and bounty. It is a confluence of all the irregular passions. There is in it envy and scorn, fear and sorrow, pride and prejudice, rashness and inconsideration, rejoicing in evil, and a desire to inflict it."*

Such is the portraiture of this disposition, drawn by the hand of no mean artist. Let the passionate man look at the picture, and learn to hate it; for, like an infuriated serpent, it need only be seen to be abhorred.

Let us *reject all excuses for the indulgence of it;* for so long as we palliate it, we shall not attempt to mortify it. It cannot be defended, either on the ground of constitutional tendency, or the greatness of the provocation, or the suddenness of the offence, or the transient duration of the fit, or that there is less evil in gusts of anger than in seasons of sullenness: no—nothing can justify it: and if we are sincere in our desires to control it, we shall admit that it is indefensible and criminal, and condemn it without hesitation or extenuation.

* Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

We must be persuaded that it is possible to control it; for if we despair of victory, we shall not engage in the conflict. Hope of success is essential to success itself.

It is certain that by using right means a hasty temper may be subdued, for it has been conquered in very many instances. It is said of SOCRATES, the wisest and most virtuous of heathen sages, that in the midst of domestic vexations and public disorders, he maintained such an undisturbed serenity, that he was never seen to leave his own house or return to it with a ruffled countenance. If on any occasion he felt a propensity to anger, he checked the rising storm by lowering the tone of his voice, and resolutely assuming a more than usual gentleness of aspect and manner. He not only refrained from acts of revenge, but triumphed over his adversaries, by disregarding the insults and injuries they offered him. This was more remarkable, as in acquiring this dominion over his passions, he had to struggle against natural propensities which ran in an opposite direction. ZOPHYRUS, an eminent physiognomist, declared that he discovered in the features of the philosopher evident traces of many vicious inclinations: the friends of SOCRATES, who were present, ridiculed the ignorance of this pretender to extraordinary sagacity; but the Sage ingenuously acknowledged the penetration of ZOPHYRUS, and confessed that he was naturally prone to vice, but that he had subdued his inclinations by the power of reason and philosophy. Let professing Christians learn, from this distinguished heathen, that it is possible to subdue natural temper, however bad and however violent it may be.

Make its cure a matter of desire. What we ardently long for, we shall vigorously pursue. Confess your sin: frankly say, "I am indeed too irritable, too passionate, too revengeful. I see the sinfulness of indulging such a temper; I am disturbed and disgraced by it; and by God's help I will subdue it. I will spare no pains, shrink from no sacrifice, be discouraged by no defeat, till I gain the victory over myself."

Meditate upon the patience of God, who bears with

your innumerable offences against *Him*, and forgives them all. Consider the example of Jesus Christ, who meekly "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; and amidst ingratitude, insults, and provocations of the basest kind, was mild as the morning sun in autumn."

Seek to acquire a habit of self-control—a power over your feelings, which shall enable you to be ever on your guard, and to repress the first emotions of passion. If possible, seal your lips in silence when the storm is rising: shut up your anger in your own bosom, and, like fire that wants air and vent, it will soon expire. Angry words often prove a fan to the spark: many persons, who in the beginning are but slightly displeased, talk themselves at length into a violent passion. Never speak till you are cool; the man who can command his tongue, will find no difficulty in governing his spirit. And when you *do* speak, let it be in meekness: "a soft answer turneth away wrath." When you see others angry, let it be an admonition to you to be cool; thus you will receive the furious indiscretions of others, like a stone into a bed of moss, where it will lie quietly without rebounding.

Stop your anger in the beginning. It is easier to put out a spark than a conflagration. It would be well always to terminate the conversation, and quit the company of an individual, when anger is creeping in. "Go from the presence of a foolish man, when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge."

Avoid disputations, which often engender strifes; and especially avoid them in reference to persons of known irritability. Who would contend with a snake or a hornet?

Brood not over injuries; "Else," says Mr. Baxter, "you will be devils to yourselves, tempt yourselves when you have no others to tempt you, and make your solitude as dangerously provoking as company."*

* Baxter's Catholic Directions; from which vast fund of practical theology, many of the particulars of this chapter are derived.

Beware of tale-bearers, and do not suffer their reports to rouse your resentments.

"*Be not inquisitive into the affairs of other men*, nor the faults of thy servants, nor the mistakes of thy friends; lest thou go out to gather sticks to kindle a fire, which shall burn thine own house."

Look at others who are addicted to passion, and see how unlovely they appear.

Commission some faithful and affectionate friend to watch over and admonish you.

But especially *mortify pride and cultivate* HUMILITY, —"Only by pride cometh contention." "He that is of a proud heart, stirreth up strife." Passion is the daughter of pride, meekness the offspring of humility. Humility is the best cure for anger, sullenness, and revenge. He that thinks much of himself, will think much of every little offence committed against him; while he that thinks little of his own importance, will think lightly of what is done to offend him. Every irritable, passionate, or revengeful person, is certainly a proud one, and should begin the cure of his passion by the removal of his pride.

But we need go no further than the chapter before us, for an antidote to anger. LOVE is sufficient of itself; we must seek to have more of this heavenly virtue. Love cannot be either passionate or revengeful. Love is full of benevolence and good-will, and therefore cannot allow itself to indulge those tempers which are unfriendly to the happiness of mankind. Let us seek to strengthen this parent principle, which will prevent the growth of whatever is evil, and promote the advancement of all that is excellent.

One caution may here be suggested for the encouragement of those who are particularly tried with an irritable temper, and that is—not to despond; if, in the work of mortification, they meet with many defeats, do not be in a passion with yourselves, for *being* in a passion, for this will only increase the evil you are anxious to destroy. Go calmly, yet courageously, to the conflict; if victorious be not elated, if defeated be

not disheartened. Often you will have to mourn your failures, and sometimes be ready to imagine that you are doomed to the hopeless task of Sysiphus, whose stone always rolled back again, when, by immense labour, he had urged it nearly to the summit of the hill. Do not expect an easy or a perfect conquest. Mourn your defeats, but do not despair. Many, after a few unsuccessful efforts, give up the cause, and abandon themselves to the tyranny of their passions. In this conflict, unsuccessful struggles are more honourable than unresisting submission.

3. Love will of course prevent *revenge.*

Revenge is a term that a Christian should blot out from his vocabulary with his own penitential tears, or with the drops of his gratitude for the pardon he has received from God. There is no passion more hostile to the very genius of Christianity, or more frequently forbidden by its authority, than this; and there is none to which the depravity of human nature more powerfully excites us. The volume of history is stained, from the beginning to the end, with the blood which has been shed by the demon of revenge. Mankind, in every age and country, have groaned under the misery inflicted by this restless and cruel spirit, which no mischief can satisfy, no suffering appease. Revenge has converted men into wild beasts, and inspired them with a wish to tear each other to pieces. It is not likely that such a temper as this would meet with the least toleration or sanction in the religion of the meek and lowly Jesus, whose person was an incarnation, and whose Gospel is an emanation, of love. Revenge is admitted by some as justifiable to a certain extent: by the reasoning and conduct of the world, the principle is allowed, yea honoured, and only condemned in its most vicious excess. Wars, duels, railings, private animosities, that do not infringe on the peace of society, are all justified on this ground. Mankind alter the golden rule, and do unto others, not as they would that others *should* do, but as others *do* unto them in a way of evil; and this, so far from being blamed, is

generally applauded as honourable and dignified. In the estimate of the people of the world, the man who refuses to resent an injury which he has received, is a poor mean-spirited creature, unworthy to associate with men of honour.

But whatever may be the maxims of the *world*, revenge is certainly forbidden by every page of the Word of God. "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger, and it is his glory to pass over a transgression." Private revenge was certainly forbidden under the Old Testament, and still more explicitly under the New. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," said our Lord, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." The same sentiments are enjoined by the apostles. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." These passages are decisive upon the point, that revenge in any form, or in any measure, is forbidden by the Christian religion.

The misfortune of many is, that they mistake the meaning of the term revenge—or rather they confine its application to the grosser, more mischievous, and more violent expressions of wrath: they think that nothing is revenge but cutting or maiming the person, openly slandering the reputation, or wantonly injuring the pro-

perty. Such, it must be admitted, are fearful ebullitions of this destructive passion; but they are not the *only* ways in which it expresses itself. There are a thousand petty acts of spite and ill will, by which a revengeful spirit may operate. If we refuse to speak to another by whom we have been injured, and pass him with silent or manifest scorn; if we take delight in talking of his failings, and in lowering him in the opinion of others; if we show ill will to his children or relations on his account: if we watch for an opportunity to perform some little act of annoyance towards him, and feel gratified in the thought that we have given him trouble or pain;—all this is done in a spirit of retaliation, and is as truly, though not so dreadfully, the actings of revenge, as if we proceeded to inflict bodily injury. The spirit of revenge simply means returning evil for evil, and taking pleasure in doing so. It may go to the extremes of calumny and murder, or may confine itself to the infliction of minor wrongs; but if we, in any way, resent an injury with ill will towards the persons who committed it, this is revenge.

A question will here arise, whether, according to this view, we are not forbidden to defend our persons, our property, and our reputation, from the aggressions of lawless mischief? Certainly not. If an assassin attempt to maim or to murder me, I am allowed to resist the attack, even to extremity; for this is not avenging an evil, but an effort to prevent one. If our character in society be aspersed, we must endeavour, by peaceful means, to gain an apology and exculpation; and if this cannot be obtained, we are authorized to appeal to the law: for, if calumny were not punished, society could not exist. If, however, instead of appealing to the law, we were to calumniate in return; if we were to inflict bodily injury on the aggressor, or take delight in injuring him in other ways;—this would be revenge; but to seek the protection of the law, without, at the same time, indulging in malice,—this is self-defence, and the defence of society. If we are injured, or are likely to be injured, in our property, we must try, by all private and

honourable means, to prevent the aggression; be willing to settle the affair by the mediation of wise and impartial men, and keep our minds free from anger, ill will, and malice, towards the aggressors: and, as a last resource, we are justifiable in submitting the cause, if it cannot be settled by any other means, to the decision of a court of justice. No Christian should resort to the tribunal of public justice till every method of private adjustment has failed.

As it respects the propriety of Christians going to law *with each other*, the testimony of the apostle is decisive. "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, to go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the Church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now, therefore, there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" Men professing godliness, especially members of the same religious community, ought, in cases of difference about property or character, to settle all their disputes by the mediation of their own brethren; and if either party decline such arbitration, he must be accountable for all the scandal thrown on the Christian profession by the legal measures to which the other may find it necessary to resort for the protection of his rights. In this case, the guilt of infringing the apostolic regulation lies on him who refuses to accede to this scriptural method of settling the differences that may arise among those who profess to be the disciples of Christ. Whatever award is made, in the case of private arbitration,

both parties should abide by it; nor must the individual against whom the decision is given, feel any ill will, or cherish any revenge, towards his successful competitor.

The law of love requires that innumerable minor offences should be passed over without being noticed, or suffered to disturb our peace of mind. And those which we find it necessary to have explained, require the utmost caution and delicacy. In these cases, love will lead us to the offender, in the spirit of meekness, to ask, not to demand—to solicit, in the most gentle manner—an explanation of the injurious treatment. In a great majority of cases, this line of conduct would stifle the animosity while it is yet a spark. If, on the contrary, we permit ourselves to take offence, and have our feelings wounded, or our anger roused; if, instead of mildly and affectionately expostulating, and seeking reconciliation, we brood over the injury, and retire in disgust, to indulge in sullenness, or to watch for an opportunity of revenge;—this is being "easily provoked," and the very opposite of "suffering long."

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE KINDNESS OF LOVE.

"Charity is kind."

It is a decisive proof, and a striking display, of the excellence of the Christian religion, that it enjoins not only the loftier and more rigid excellences of the human character, but those also which are delicately amiable and tender; not only the masculine virtues, but the feminine graces; in short, that it not only prepares its possessor to be a patriot on the great theatre of his country, or a spectacle of heroic martyrdom to God, to angels, and to men,—but a sympathizing friend in the social and domestic circles. Love can either expand its benevolence to the claims of the whole human family, or concentrate its emotions, for a time, in one individual object of pity, or affection. "Love is kind." Kindness means a disposition to please—an anxiety, manifested by our conduct, to promote the comfort of our species. Pity commiserates their sorrows, mercy relieves their wants and mitigates their woes; but kindness is a general attention to their comfort. It is thus described and distinguished by a celebrated writer on English synonymes. "The terms affectionate and fond characterize feelings; kind is an

epithet applied to outward actions, as well as inward feelings; a disposition is affectionate or fond; a behaviour is kind. A person is *affectionate*, who has the object of his regard strongly in his mind, who participates in his pleasures and in his pains, and is pleased with his society, A person is *kind*, who expresses a tender sentiment, or does any service in a pleasant manner. Relatives should be affectionate to each other; we should be kind to all who stand in need of our kindness." Kindness, then, appears to be an affectionate behaviour. This is what the apostle means, when he admonishes us to "be kindly affectioned one to another."

Let us view the kind man in contrast with some other characters.

He is opposed to the *rigid*, *severe*, and *censorious* person, who will make no allowance for the infirmities or inexperience of others; but judges harshly, reproves sternly, and speaks severely of all who do not come up to his standard. Kindness, on the contrary, makes all reasonable allowances, frames the best excuses it can, consistently with truth and holiness; speaks *of* the offender in a way of mitigation, and *to* him in a way of compassion; does not publish nor exaggerate his faults, and endeavours to find out some redeeming qualities to set off against his failings.

A kind man is opposed to a *proud* and *overbearing* one. The latter is ever seeking an opportunity to display his superiority, and make you feel your inferiority; and cares not how much your feelings are hurt by this offensive exhibition of his consequence. Kindness, if conscious, as it sometimes must be, of its superiority, takes care that those who are below it shall not feel a painful sense of their inferiority. Without removing the distinctions of social life, or sacrificing its dignity, it will conceal as much as possible, its pre-eminence, or unite it with such affability as shall render it by no means unpleasant.

Kindness is opposed to *coldness* and *selfishness* of disposition. There are persons who, though neither cruel,

nor injurious, nor really hard-hearted, are yet so cold, and distant, and retiring, and repulsive, that they can neither be approached nor moved. They look upon the scenes around them with the fixed and beamless eye, the chillness and quiescence, of the statûe, for they have no interest in the concerns of the world. But kindness is the visible expression of a feeling and merciful heart; it is the goings forth of a tender and susceptible mind; it claims kindred with the human race; it is all ear to listen—all heart to feel—all eye to examine and to weep—all hand and foot to relieve; it invites the sufferer with kind words, and sends him not empty away.

Kindness is opposed to a *vain* and *ostentatious liberality*. Some will be charitable, if they may have spectators of their good deeds, who shall go and proclaim their alms: thus the weaknesses of human nature often come in the place of duty, and supply the want of principle, though certainly without any advantage to their possessor. They spoil the action by their mode of performing it; for they will, in the most indelicate manner, make the object of their bounty feel a painful sense of obligation: they will state the exact amount, almost in pecuniary value, of the favours they have conferred; and then go away and give such publicity to their doings, that the beneficiary is almost everywhere sure to hear of what has been done for him.

Kindness will, on the other hand, conceal, as much as possible, that it is actually conferring a favour; will do every thing to cause it to descend lightly upon the spirit of the recipient; and would, if circumstances allowed, gladly extend relief from behind a veil which hides the giver, and does every thing to prevent the sense of obligation from being either painful or oppressive.

Kindness is opposed to the *benevolence of partiality, prejudice, and caprice.* There are not a few who are lavish in their fondness towards persons of their own party, or upon those who happen to be their favourites for the time; but for any beyond their own circle of

partizans, or of their select friends, they have none of the charities of life—their benevolent regards are purely sectarian, or absolutely capricious. But kindness is a clear perennial spring, rising up from a heart replete with universal philanthropy, holding on its way, unimpeded by prejudices or partialities, and distributing its benefits alike upon all that it meets with in its course.

Having thus contrasted kindness with some characteristics to which it is opposed, let us now consider the manner in which it acts.

It expresses itself in *words* that are calculated to please. As not only our words, but the tones of our voice, are indicative of our thoughts and feelings, it is of consequence for us to be careful, both in *what* we say, and *how* we say it. Half of the quarrels which disturb the peace of society arise from unkind words, and not a few from unkind *tones*. We should sedulously avoid a sour, morose, chiding mode of speech, and adopt a soothing, conciliatory, and affectionate style of address. A surly tone is calculated to wound or offend, and love, which carries the law of kindness upon its lips, will, consequently, avoid it. A snappish, petulant, scolding address, is in the highest degree repulsive and dissonant in the intercourse of society. We may not have, it is true, the music of sound in our speech, but it is our own fault if we have not the music of love. We need not employ grimace, fawning sycophancy, hollow and unmeaning compliment, but we may be courteous, and affectionate; and we ought to "let our speech be seasoned with salt, that it may minister grace to the hearers." Every word, and every modulation of the voice, that is likely to offend, should be studiously avoided, and *will* be avoided by kindness, which extends, also, to *actions*. It is anxious not to give offence by any thing which it does: it is most delicately tender in reference to the feelings of its object, and would not unnecessarily crush the wing of an insect, much less inflict a wound upon a rational mind. There are persons who, in a spirit of selfish independence, care not whom they please, or whom

they offend; but love is as anxious not to offend, as it is solicitous about its own gratification: its neighbour's comfort is as dear to it as his own: it calculates, deliberates, weighs the tendency of actions, and, when by incaution, or pure misfortune, it has occasioned distress, it hastens, by every practicable means, to heal the wound.

Kindness not only abstains from actual injury, but it is *active in conferring benefits*—watches for an opportunity to please—is ever ready to afford its assistance when appealed to,—and is not satisfied, unless it can do something to increase the general stock of comfort. It accommodates itself to their habits, partialities, or prejudices; adapts itself, in things indifferent and lawful, to their modes of acting, and does not wantonly oppose their predilections, when such resistance would occasion them distress. A stiff, uncomplying behaviour, which consults nothing but its own humour, and which will not sacrifice the least punctilio of its own habits, to give pleasure, has not a particle of beneficence about it. Such an individual is like a person in a crowd, who *will* walk with his arms stretched out, or with annoying weapons in his hand.

It extends, of course, to *little things*, as well as to great ones. The happiness or misery of life does not consist so much in the transport of joy, or the anguish of affliction, as in feelings of an inferior kind—which, though less violent, are more frequent than those strong emotions. Hence it is in our power to make others miserable in life; not, perhaps, by deeds of cruelty or injustice, which we dare not, or cannot commit, as by indulging in unaccommodating dispositions towards them —by vexing them with acts of unkindness, which will neither blast our reputation, nor put in peril our property, liberty, or life: and it is also in our power to make them happy, not so much by signal and material services, which are seldom called for at our hands, as by the inferior offices of benevolence. The daily, and almost hourly reciprocity of little acts of good or ill

will, which we have an opportunity of performing, go a great way to the making up of good or bad neighbourhood. There are those who, in the greater expressions of Christian mercy, are really humane; whose benevolence at the same time has not learnt to stoop to little things: they are compassionate, but they want kindness: they would relieve a starving beggar, but they would not put themselves in ever so small a degree out of their way, to accommodate, in trivial matters, a near neighbour.

Kindness is *universal in its objects.* We have known individuals who could never do enough for some objects of their regard, but they are by no means persons of diffusive kindness; and, perhaps, if we examine, we shall find that their benevolence has a great mixture of selfishness in it, for it is exercised only towards those from whom they expect an ample return. It is the kindness of barter, not of charity: it is so much of their comfort put out at interest, not given away to the needy; they either have had, or expect to have, value received for all they do. But love is universal in its aspect; it is ever ready to do a kind office for any one that either solicits or needs its assistance. Its language is, "Ho, *every one* that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." It has a kind look, word, and act, for everybody. Nor are its enemies denied the assistance of its efforts. Such is the generous spirit of the Christian religion, as appears from the passages quoted in a preceding chapter. Such is the refined, the sublime morality of the New Testament. Yes, these are the principles on which kindness acts: it extends its beneficence to the very man that has treated it with contumely and scorn—with cruelty, insult, and oppression. This is its duty and its inclination. In imitation of the dying Saviour, who gave his last prayer to his murderers, it says, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

What a fascinating character is the man of distinguished kindness! he is invested with indescribable

loveliness: he may not have the glory in which the patriot, the hero, or the martyr is enshrined; but he is adorned in no common degree with the beauties of holiness. He carries about with him the majesty of goodness, if not the dominion of greatness. The light of his countenance is the warm sunshine, to which the spirits of grief repair from their dark retreats, to bask in its glow; and his gentle words are like soft melody to chase away the evil thoughts from the bosom of melancholy; and to hush to peace the troubled reflections of the distempered mind. As he moves along his career, distributing the unexpensive but efficient expressions of his regards, it is amidst the blessing of those that are ready to perish, and the notes of the widow's heart, which he has turned to joy. When he comes unexpectedly into the company of his friends, every countenance puts on the appearance of complacency, and it appears as if a good genius had come among them to bless the party; as he looks round on the circle, with a smile of beneficence that has found an abiding place upon his brow, he presents the brightest resemblance to be found in our selfish world, of the entrance of the Saviour among his disciples, when he said, "Peace be unto you!" and breathed upon them the Holy Ghost. Although he neither seeks nor wishes an equivalent, in return for his many acts of benevolence, his gentle spirit receives back, in a full tide, the streams of consolation which had ebbed from his own heart to fill the empty channels of his neighbour's happiness. Who can be unkind to *him*, who is kind to all? What heart is so hard, what mind is so cruel, what spirit is so diabolical, as to wound him, who never appears among his race but as a ministering angel? There is a magic in his tears, to melt to sympathy the stubborn soul of cruelty itself, which has a tear for no one else; and no less a magic in his smiles, so far to relax and soften the hard features of envy, as to reflect for a moment the sunshine of his joy. While he lives, every man is his admirer; and when he

dies, every man is his mourner: while he is on earth, his name has a home in every heart; and when he is gone, he has a monument in every memory:—and this is the description of his character—the record of his praise: LOVE IS KIND!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CONTENTMENT OF LOVE.

"Charity envieth not."

Envy is that passion, which causes us to feel uneasiness at the sight of another's possessions or happiness, and which makes us dislike him on that account. Of all the base passions, this is the basest. It is unmingled malignity, the very worst and bitterest dregs of human depravity; the most direct contrariety of love. Envy is either general or special in its objects. It often exists in the mind to such an extent, that its subjects seem almost instinctively opposed to excellence and to happiness, wherever they see them, or whenever they hear of them. They may not regard the individuals on whom their envious glance is fixed in the light of competitors or rivals; they may have nothing to hope from their depression—nothing to fear from their elevation; but it is enough to awaken their uneasiness and dislike, to know that they are in some respects superior. They cannot bear to see excellence or happiness in any one, or ever to hear the language of commendation or praise. They would beggar the universe to enrich themselves, and monopolize all possessions, and all admiration; they would be alone in the world, as the sole occupants of every thing valuable, and can endure neither a superior nor an equal. This, it must

be allowed, is a maturity to which envy rarely attains, compared with its more *special* and limited operation.

The OBJECTS of envy are commonly such as these.

1. *Persons who are nearly on our own level.* Individuals who are either much above us in station, or much below us, are not so likely to excite uneasiness and dislike, as those who are of our own standing, or approaching to it. The tradesman envies not the nobleman, but some fellow tradesman; the laurels and fame of the hero are not envied by the common soldier, but by some officer of his own rank.

2. Those who though much above us, *occupy a station from which we have been cast down*, are likely to be regarded by us with an evil eye, and to draw forth our dislike.

3. *Competitors*, but especially some single rival for wealth, or fame, or any valuable possession, is a powerful temptation to this sin. It is extremely difficult to witness their success and superiority, and feel nothing of envy towards them.

It is evident, that persons *descending in life* are much exposed to this vice: and, perhaps, those still more so, who are *candidates for popular applause*, whether they be literary, scientific, military, or professional men. "Vanity, or a thirst after applause, is the most unsocial and envious of the passions, avarice itself not excepted. The reason is plain. Property is a kind of good, which may be more easily attained, and is capable of more minute subdivision, than fame. In the pursuit of wealth, men are led, by an attention to their own interest, to promote the welfare of each other: their advantages are reciprocal; the benefits which each is anxious to acquire for himself, he reaps in the greatest abundance from the union of society. The pursuits of vanity are quite contrary. The portion of time and attention mankind are willing to spare from their avocations and pleasures, to devote to the admiration of each other, is so small, that every successful adventurer is felt to have impared the common stock. The success of one, is the disappointment of multitudes: for though there

be many rich, many virtuous, many wise men, fame must necessarily be the portion of but few. Hence every vain man regarding his competitor as his rival, is strongly tempted to rejoice in his miscarriage, and to repine at his success.

There is not any kind of superiority, however low in its nature, or obscure in situation, which is not found to be sufficient to call forth the ill will and hatred of some inferior or disappointed spectator. Children and rustics, as well as philosophers, warriors, and princes, are subject to its influence. Like the venomous spider, it weaves its web, and directs its deadly glance, in the cottages of poverty, the mansions of affluence, and the halls of science. It is the epidemic of the human race, the most common operation of human depravity. The Apostle seems to give it as a general description of human nature, while unrenewed by divine grace. "Living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." The whole Gentile world, before the coming of Christ, is described as having been "full of envy." "Envyings" bear a high place among the works of the flesh; and on the converts from Paganism, the churches of believers, there was no one evil of which the prohibition was more frequently, or more earnestly enjoined, than this: and the apostle James tells us, that it is still partially inherent in every man—"the spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy."

But let us now contemplate its HATEFUL NATURE. It is a vice of the utmost deformity and heinousness. To feel uneasiness at another's happiness, or excellence, and to dislike him on that account, is a sin that needs no analysis to prove its deadly nature—no dissection to expose its corruption; it presents at once, to the most superficial observer, a frightful and disgusting appearance—a kind of leprous surface. It stands directly opposed to the nature of God, whose love delights in excellence and in happiness, and whose grace produces both; and by whom this sin must be regarded with infinite loathing and abhorrence.

It is a secret murmuring against the appointments of heaven—an incessant quarrel with Providence—an accusation preferred against the wisdom, equity, and goodness of the divine administration. As it is unlike God, so it is the image of Satan,—being the disposition, united with pride, which cast down the apostate angels from their seats in heaven, and which fills and fires their bosoms in the bottomless pit; it is perfectly the state of hell, and unceasingly the passion of devils, who despair for themselves, and envy the happiness of men and angels, yet cannot rejoice either in the good or the evil they witness, although they endeavour to hinder the good, and promote the evil, with all the restlessness of malice, and the devices of a mighty understanding. It is a parent crime, and its progeny are as mischievous and as deformed as itself: for malice, hatred, falsehood, slander, are its ordinary brood; and not unfrequently murder: for when carried to excess, there is scarcely an injury within its reach which it would not inflict upon its object. It cannot even offer the excuses for itself which many vices sometimes bring forward: anger pleads the provocation it has received; but envy has received no offence, except the well-being of another be an insult: lust and intemperance plead the gratification which their objects yield, and robbery holds up its gain; but envy gains nothing but misery, and converts the happiness, of which it is the witness, into wormwood and gall for its own cup, and transvenoms the honey of another man's comfort into the poison of asps for its own bosom: it is a source of eternal vexation—an instrument of self-torment—a rottenness in the bones—a burning ulceration of the soul—a crime, which, partaking of the guilt, partakes as largely of the misery of hell.

Such is envy; but who can describe it accurately, or do it justice? If we look for it as embodied in living characters, we shall find it in Cain, the proto-murderer, who slew his brother at the instigation of this vice. We shall find it in the dark, and gloomy, and revengeful spirit of Saul, who, under the influence of

envy, plotted for years the slaughter of David. We shall find it in the king of Israel, when he pined for the vineyard of Naboth, and shed his blood to gain it. Yea, it was envy that perpetrated that most atrocious crime, ever planned in hell or executed on earth, on which the sun refused to look, and at which nature gave signs of abhorrence by the rending of the rocks; I mean the crucifixion of Christ: for the evangelist tells us, that for envy, the Jews delivered our Lord.

Bishop Hall has given us a very striking portraiture of the envious man, which I shall here introduce:— "He feeds on other's evils; and hath no disease but his neighbour's welfare: whatsoever God does for him, he cannot be happy with company; and if he were put to choose whether he would rather have equals in a common felicity, or superiors in misery, he would demur upon the election. His eye casts out too much, and never returns home, but to make comparisons with another's good. He is an ill prizer of foreign commodity—worse of his own; for *that* he rates too high —*this* undervalues. You shall have him ever inquiring into the estates of his equals and betters, wherein he is not more desirous to hear all, than loth to hear any thing over-good; and if just report relate aught better than he would, he redoubles the question, as being hard to believe what he likes not; and hopes yet, if that be averred again to his grief, that there is somewhat concealed in the relation, which, if it were known, would argue the commended party miserable, and blemish him with secret shame. He is ready to quarrel with God, because the next field is fairer grown; and angrily calculates his cost, and time, and tillage. Whom he dares not openly backbite, nor wound with a direct censure, he strikes smoothly with an over-cold praise: and when he sees that he must either maliciously oppugn the just praise of another (which were unsafe,) or approve it by assent, he yieldeth; but shows, withal, that his means were such, both by nature and education, that he could not, without much neglect, be less commendable: so his happiness shall

be made the colour of detraction. When a wholesome law is propounded, he crosseth it either by open or close opposition—not for any incommodity or inexpedience, but because it proceedeth from any mouth but his own; and it must be a case rarely plausible that will not admit some probable contradiction. When his equal should rise to honour, he striveth against it unseen, and rather with much cost suborneth great adversaries; and when he sees his resistance vain, he can give a hollow gratulation in pretence; but in secret disparageth that advancement: either the man is unfit for the place, or the place for the man; or, if fit, yet less gainful, or more common than opinion: whereto he adds, that himself might have had the same dignity upon better terms, and refused it. He is witty in devising suggestions to bring his rival out of love into suspicion; if he be courteous, he is seditiously popular; if bountiful, he binds over his clients to faction; if successful in war, he is dangerous in peace; if wealthy, he lays up for a day; if powerful, nothing wants but opportunity for rebellion; his submission, is ambitious hyprocrisy; his religion, politic insinuation; —no action is safe from an envious construction. When he receives a good report of him whom he emulates, he saith, Fame is partial, and covers mischiefs; and pleaseth himself with hope to find it false: and if ill will hath dispersed a more spiteful narration, he lays hold on that against all witnesses, and broacheth that rumour for truth, because worst; and when he sees him perfectly miserable, he can at once pity him and rejoice. What himself cannot do, others shall not: he hath gained well, if he have hindered the success of what he would have done and could not. He conceals his best skill, not so as it may not be known that he knows it, but so as it may not be learned, because he would have the world miss him. He attained to a sovereign medicine by the secret legacy of a dying empiric, whereof he will leave no heir, lest the praise should be divided. Finally, he is an enemy to God's favours, if they fall beside himself; the best nurse of

ill fame; a man of the worst diet, for he consumes himself, and delights in pining; a thornhedge covered with nettles; a peevish interpreter of good things; and no other than a lean and pale carcass quickened with a fiend."

How hateful, then, is this crime; and although we may not be in danger of carrying it to the excess here stated, yet we should ever strive against its least and lowest degrees. The means of opposing and mortifying it are many.

Let us *very seriously meditate on its evil nature.* A steady contemplation of its deformity and demon-like countenance, is calculated to excite disgust, and to produce abhorrence. Many evils, and this among the number, are too much indulged, because they are too little contemplated. The more we meditate upon the heinousness of envy, the more we shall be convinced of the utter unsuitableness of such a temper as this to be the inmate of a Christian's bosom: it is like a fiend inhabiting the temple of the Lord. We must next *form a deliberate resolution for its mortification:* we must stand prepared to take the greatest pains, to maintain the most determined efforts, for the riddance of our hearts from so hateful a disposition. Let us next consider, that the circumstances which excite our envy are among the arrangements of a wise Providence; and that to dislike another on account of his excellence, or happiness, is a crime of no less magnitude than a wish to oppose and subvert the dispensations of heaven. Let us remember, that if others have more than ourselves, we have infinitely more than we deserve; a deliberate and frequent consideration of our numerous and aggravated sins, with our deliverance from their consequences, together with a survey of our mercies, and hopes, as Christians, would very powerfully help us in the great business of mortifying envy; for the chief difference between man and man, as to real happiness, lies in spiritual distinctions; and if we have these, the absence of any thing else is matter of little consequence. It may not be amiss also to consider, how comparatively

small is the amount of happiness derived by the object of our envy, from those possessions on the ground of which we dislike him: and how soon, could we transfer them to ourselves, they would cease to impart any strong gratification to us. We always act under a delusion, when we indulge this hateful passion: its objects are seen through a magnifying medium of very high power. The circumstances which excite our envy, have their attendant evils;—evils which, though concealed from general observation, are well known to the possessor of them. We should labour to be content with such things as we have: contentment is the secret of happiness, whether we have much or little. The man who makes up his mind to enjoy what he has, is quite as happy as he who possesses twice as much.

But still the great thing is, to endeavour, by God's gracious help, *to increase in* LOVE. Our envy will then as certainly diminish, as darkness retires before the entrance of light, or cold before the power of heat. Love and envy are the very antipodes of each other: the former delights in the happiness of others, the latter is made miserable by it. Let us endeavour to cultivate this disposition, and to delight in witnessing and diffusing blessedness. This is what the Apostle meant, when he said, "Rejoice with those that do rejoice." What a beatifying, and even sublime, temper is that, which leads its possessor to find consolation, amidst its own straits, privations, and difficulties, in contemplating the possessions and the comforts of those around him! What relief would such elevated virtue bring to the mourner, when he could turn his own darkened orb toward the illumination of his neighbour's prosperity! Happy the man who can thus borrow the joys of others when he has none, or few, of his own; and, from the wilderness of his own situation, enjoy the beautiful prospect of his friends' domain. Difficult and rare as such a temper is, it is that which is the subject of the Apostle's description, in the chapter we are considering, and which it is the duty of every Christian to

cultivate. Hard, indeed, is the saying, and few there are who can bear it, but it is assuredly the lesson which Christ teaches his disciples, and which those disciples must all endeavour to learn. Much may be done by effort. Let us determine, by God's help, to acquire it; let us make the attempt, and let us only persevere, notwithstanding many defeats and many discouragements, and it is astonishing what may be done. But this goeth not forth but by fasting and prayer. Love cannot be cultivated, nor envy destroyed, in our hearts, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. We may as well try to pull up by the roots the oak of a century's growth, or overturn a mountain by our own strength, as to eradicate the vice of envy from our hearts, without the aid of God's own Spirit: that aid is promised to fervent and persevering prayer, and if we have it not, the fault is our own.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HUMILITY OF LOVE.

"Charity is not puffed up—vaunteth not itself."

The Apostle's meaning, in this part of his description, evidently is, that love has not a high and overweening conceit of its own possessions and acquirements, and does not ostentatiously boast of what it is, has done, can do, or intends to do. It is opposed to pride and vanity, and is connected with true humility.

Pride signifies such an exalted idea of ourselves, as leads to self-esteem, and to contempt of others. It is self-admiration—self-doating. It differs from vanity thus: pride causes us to value ourselves; vanity makes us anxious for applause. Pride renders a man odious; vanity makes him ridiculous. Love is equally opposed to both.

Pride is the sin which laid the moral universe in ruins. It was this that impelled Satan and his confederates to a mad "defiance of the Omnipotent to arms," for which they were driven from heaven, and taught, by their better experience, that "God resisteth the proud." Banished from the world of celestials, pride alighted on our globe, in its way to hell, and brought destruction in its train. Propagated from our common and fallen parent with our species, it is the original sin—the in-

herent corruption of our nature. It spreads over humanity, with the contagious violence, the loathsome appearance of a moral leprosy, raging alike through the palace and the cottage, and infecting equally the prince and the peasant.

The grounds of pride are various: whatever constitutes a distinction between man and man, is the occasion of this hateful disposition. It is a vice that does not dwell exclusively in kings' houses, wear only soft raiment, and feed every day upon titles, fame, or affluence; it accommodates itself to our circumstances, and adapts itself to our distinctions, of whatever kind they be. The *usual* grounds of pride are the following:—

Wealth. Some value themselves on account of their fortune, look down with contempt on those below them, and exact obsequiousness towards themselves, and deference for their opinions, according to the thousands of money or of acres which they possess. Others are proud of their *talents*, either natural or acquired. The brilliancy of their genius, the extent of their learning, the splendour of their imagination, the acuteness of their understanding, their power to argue, or declaim, form the object of self-esteem, and the reasons of that disdain which they pour upon all who are inferior to them in mental endowments. But these things are not so common in the Church of God, as those which we now mention.

Ecclesiastical connexions form, in many cases, the occasion of pride. This was exemplified in the Jews, who boasted that they were the children of Abraham, and worshipped in the temple of the Lord. Their self-admiration, as the members of the only true church, and as the covenant people of God, was insufferably disgusting. In this feature of their character, they are too often imitated in modern times. Whatever leads us to think highly of ourselves in matters of religion, and to despise others, whether it be the distinctions of earthly greatness, the practice of religious

duties, or the independence of our mode of thinking, is opposed to the spirit of Christian charity.

Superior light on the subject of revealed truth, is no unusual occasion of pride. The Arminian Pharisee dwells with fondness on the goodness of his heart; the Antinomian, with equal haughtiness, values himself on the clearness of his head; and the Socinian, as far from humility as either of them, is inflated with a conceit of the strength of his reason, and its elevation above vulgar prejudices;—while not a few moderate Calvinists regard with complacency *their* sagacity in discovering the happy medium. As men are more proud of their understanding than of their disposition, it is very probable that religious opinions are more frequently the cause of conceit and self-importance, than anything else which could be mentioned. "It is knowledge," says the Apostle, "that puffeth up." We are the men, and wisdom will die with us, is the temper of multitudes.

Religious gifts are sometimes the ground of self-admiration. Fluency and fervour in extempore prayer, ability to converse on doctrinal subjects, especially if accompanied by a ready utterance in public, have all, through the influence of Satan and the depravity of our nature, led to the disposition we are now condemning. None are in more danger of this than the ministers of religion;—it is the besetting sin of their office. There is no one gift which offers so strong a temptation both to vanity and to pride, as that of public speaking. If the orator really excel and is successful, he is the immediate spectator of his success, and has not even to wait till he has finished his discourse; for although the decorum of public worship will not allow of *audible* tokens of applause, it does of *visible* ones;—the look of interest, the tear of penitence or of sympathy, the smile of joy, the deep impression on the mind, the death-like stillness, cannot be concealed;—all seems like a tribute of admiration to the presiding spirit of the scene; and then the applause which is

conveyed to his ear, after all the silent plaudits which have reached his eye, is equally calculated to puff him up with pride. No men are more in danger of this sin than the ministers of the Gospel: none should watch more sleeplessly against it.

Deep religious experience has often been followed by the same effect, in those cases where it has been remarkably enjoyed. The methods of divine grace, though marked by a uniformity sufficient to preserve that likeness of character, which is essential to the unity of the spirit and the sympathies of the church, are still distinguished by a vast variety of minor peculiarities. The convictions of sin in some minds are deeper, the apprehensions of Divine wrath are more appalling, the transition from the poignant compunction of repentance bordering on despair, to joy and peace in believing, more slow and more awful, the subsequent repose more settled, and the joy more unmingled with the gloom of distressing fears, than is experienced by the generality of their brethren. Such persons are looked up to as professors of religion, whose religious history has been remarkable, as vessels of mercy on which the hand of the Lord has bestowed peculiar pains, and which are eminently fitted for the master's use. They are regarded as having a peculiar sanctity about them; and hence they are in danger of falling under the temptation to which they are exposed, and of being proud of their experience. They look down from what they suppose to be their lofty elevation, if not with disdain yet with suspicion, or with pity upon those whose way has not been in their track. Their seasons of elevated communion with God, of holy enlargement of soul, are sometimes followed with this tendency. Paul was never more in danger of losing his humility, than when he was just returned from gazing upon the celestial throne.

Zeal, whether it be felt in the cause of humanity or of piety, has frequently produced pride. This was strikingly illustrated in the case of the Pharisee: "God, I thank thee," said this inflated devotee, "that I am

not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican: I fast twice in the week—I give tithes of all that I possess!" Where a natural liberality of mind, or religious principle, has led men to lavish their property, or their influence, or their time, upon benevolent institutions, they have too often returned from the scene of public activity, to indulge in private and personal admiration. They have read with peculiar delight the reports in which their munificence is recorded and have assigned to themselves a high place in the roll of public benefactors.

On all these grounds does pride exalt itself; but love is no less opposed to *vanity* than it is to pride—"it vaunteth not itself." It does not boast of, or ostentatiously display, its possessions, acquirements, or operations. A disposition to boast, and to attract attention, is a common foible. We see this among the people of the world, in reference to their property, their learning, their connexions, their influence. They are afraid the public should underrate them; forgetting that they pay a poor compliment to their importance, when they thus think it necessary to proclaim it in order to its being known. If indeed, they are what they wish to make us believe they are, the fact would be obvious without this method of publishing it in every company. Puffing is always suspicious, or superfluous; for real greatness no more needs a crier than the sun.

But it is more particularly in reference to religious matters that this observation of the Apostle applies. We should not appear eager to display our gifts, nor should we vaunt of *our religious experience.* The manner in which some good but weak people talk of their pious conflicts, is indeed intolerably offensive. No matter who is present, pious or profane, scorner or believer, they parade all their seasons of despondency or of rapture; they tell you how they struggled with the great enemy of souls, and overcome him; how they wrestled with God, and had power to prevail; and that you may have as exalted an opinion of their

humility, as of their enjoyment, they tell you in the utter violation of all propriety, and almost of decency, what temptations they have encountered—what hair-breadth escapes they have had from the commission of sin. Their motive is obvious; all this vaunting is to impress you with the idea that they are no ordinary Christians. Who can wonder that all religious conversation should have been branded with the epithets of whining cant and disgusting hypocrisy, when the injudicious and nauseating effusions of such talkers are regarded as a fair sample of it?

Too common is it to make the *externals of religion* the subject of vain-glorious boasting. How long can you be in the company of some Christians without hearing of their splendid place of worship, and its vast superiority over all the rest in the town? They establish the most insulting and degrading comparisons between their minister and his brethren in the neighbourhood: none so eloquent, none so able, none so successful, as he. Notwithstanding your attachment to the pastor under whose ministry you sit with pleasure and profit, you are condemned to hear him dishonoured and degraded by one of these gasconading professors, who is as destitute of good manners as he is of good feeling.

And what a propensity is there in the present age, to display, and parade, and boasting, in reference to *religious zeal!* This is one of the temptations of the day in which we live, and a compliance with the temptation one of its vices. We have at length arrived at an era of the Christian church, when all the denominations into which it is divided, and all the congregations into which it is sub-divided, have their public religious institutions for the diffusion of divine truth. These institutions cannot be supported without property; and the property that is contributed for their support, must be matter of general notoriety. Like the tributary streams flowing into a great river, or like great rivers flowing into the sea, the contributions of associated congregations or communities, make up the general

fund: but, unlike the tributary streams which flow silently to form the mighty mass of waters, without requiring the ocean to publish to the universe the amount of each separate quota, the offerings of the different religious bodies, must be announced, to the uttermost farthing, before the world. This perhaps, is necessary, that the contributors may know that their bounty has not been stopped and swallowed up in its course, but has reached its destined receptacle: and such is the weakness of our principles, and the strength of our imperfections, that this publicity to a certain extent, seems necessary to stimulate our languid zeal. But it has given opportunity, and that opportunity has been eagerly embraced, to establish a system of unhallowed vanity between the different denominations and the various congregations into which the Christian church is divided. Who can have heard the speeches, read the reports, and witnessed the proceedings of many of our public meetings, convened for the support of missionary societies, without being grieved at the strange fire, and diseased offerings, which have been brought to the altar of the Lord? The object of the meeting was good, for it was the destruction of an idolatry as insulting to Jehovah as that which Jehu destroyed; but like the king of Israel, hundreds of voices exclaimed in concert, "Come, see our zeal for the Lord!" The image of jealousy was lifted up in the temple of Jehovah; adulatory speakers chaunted its praises, in compliments upon the liberality of the worshippers; the multitude responded in shouts of applause to the tribute paid to their zeal; the praise of God was drowned amidst the praise of men; and the crowd dispersed, in love with the cause, it is true, but more for their own sakes, than for the sake of God, or of the heathen world.

Difficult indeed it is, with such hearts as ours, to do any thing entirely pure from all admixture of a sinful nature; but when we take pains to make our zeal known; when we employ effort to draw public attention upon us; when we wish and design to make our-

selves talked of as a most extraordinary, liberal, and active people; when we listen for praises, and are disappointed if they do not come in the measure we expected, and feast upon them if they are presented; when we look with envy on those who have outstripped us, and find no pleasure in any future efforts, because we cannot be first; when we look with jealousy on those who are approaching our level, and feel a new stimulus, not from a fresh perception of the excellence of the object, but from a fear that we shall be eclipsed in public estimation; when we talk of our fellow workers, or to them, with disdain of their efforts, and with arrogant ostentation of our own;—then, indeed, have we employed the cause only as a pedestal on which to exalt ourselves; in pulling down one kind of idolatry, we have set up another, and rendered our contributions nothing better than a costly sacrifice to our own vanity. All this is a want of that Christian love which "vaunteth not itself, and is not puffed up."

True zeal is modest and retiring; it is not like the scentless sunflower, which spreads its gaudy petals to the light of heaven, and turns its face to the orb of day through his course, as if determined to be seen; but like the modest violet, it hides itself in the bank, and sends forth its fragrance from its deep retirement. It employs no trumpeter, it unfurls no banner, like the hypocrite; but while conferring the most substantial benefits, it would, if it were possible, be like the angels who, while ministering to the heirs of salvation, are unseen, and unkown, by the objects of their benevolent attention.

Observe the manner in which love operates to the destruction of this evil. Love, as we have already had frequent occasion to remark, is a desire to promote the happiness of those around us; but proud and vain persons tend materially to impair this happiness. They generally excite disgust, frequently offer insult, and sometimes inflict pain. Their object is to impress you with a degrading sense of inferiority, and thus to wound and mortify your feelings. Caring little for your peace,

they pursue a career of contumely and scorn, dreaded by the weak and despised by the wise. It is impossible to be happy in their society; for if you oppose them, you are insulted—if you submit to them, you are degraded.

Love is essentially and unalterably attended with HUMILITY; humility is the garment with which it is clothed, its inseparable and invariable costume. By humility, we do not intend the servility which crouches, or the meanness that creeps, or the sycophancy which fawns; but a disposition to think lowly of our attainments, a tendency to dwell upon our defects, rather than our excellences, an apprehension of our inferiority compared with those around us, with what we ought to be, and what we might be. It is always attended with that modest deportment, which neither boasts of itself, nor seeks to depreciate any one: humility is the inward feeling of lowliness—modesty is the outward expression of it; humility leads a man to feel that he deserves little—modesty leads him to demand little.

"The ancient sages, amidst all their panegyrics upon virtue, and inquires into the elements of moral excellence, not only valued humility at an exceedingly low estimate, but reckoned it a quality so contemptible, as to neutralize the other properties which went, in their estimation, to the composition of a truly noble and exalted character. These sentiments have been adopted, in modern times, by the great majority both of the vulgar and of the philosophers, differing from their predecessors chiefly in this circumstance,—the more complete absence of that humility and modesty which would have adorned them, and in their determined and obstinate rejection of that true standard of character, after which the ancients so eagerly sought. By the touchstone which Christianity applies to the human character, it is found that pride and independence, which the world falsely dignifies with the epithet *honorable*, are really base alloy; and that of every character formed upon proper principles, and possessed of genuine worth, humility is at once a distinguishing fea-

ture and the richest ornament. And on this subject, as on every other, Christianity accords with the sentiments of right reason—that it is unquestionably the duty of every intelligent (especially every imperfect) creature to be humble; for they have nothing which they have not received, and are indebted, in every movement they make, to an agency infinitely superior to their own."

Now, as divine revelation is the only system which, either in ancient or in modern times, assigns to humility the rank of a virtue, or makes provision for its cultivation, this in an eminent degree does both. It assigns to it the highest place, and a sort of preeminence among the graces of piety; bestows upon it the greatest commendations, enforces it by the most powerful motives, encourages it by the richest promises, draws it in to exercise by the most splendid examples, and represents it as the brightest jewel in the Christian's crown Every thing in the word of God is calculated to humble us; the description which it contains of the divine character, combining an infinitude of greatness, goodness, and glory, compared with which the loftiest being is an insignificant atom, and the purest heart as depravity itself; the view it gives us of innumerable orders of created intelligences, all above man, in the date of their existence, the capacity of their minds, and the elevation of their virtue; the account it preserves of the intellectual and moral perfection of man in his pristine innocence, and the discovery which it thus furnishes of the height from which he has fallen, and the contrast it thus draws between his present and his former nature; the declaration it makes of the purity of the eternal law, and the immeasurable depth at which we are thus seen to lie beneath our obligations; the history it exhibits of the circumstances of man's fall, of the progress of his sin, and of the numberless and awful obliquities of his corruptions; the characteristics it affixes to his situation as a sinner, a rebel, an enemy of God, a child of wrath, an heir of perdition; the method it presents, by which he is redeemed from sin and hell,—a scheme which he neither invented, nor thought of, nor aided,

but which is a plan of *grace*, from first to last, even the grace of God, manifested in and through the propitiation of Christ—a plan, which, in all its parts, and in all its bearings, seems expressly devised to exclude boasting; the means by which it asserts that the renovation and sanctification of the human heart are carried on, and its security to eternal life established even by the effectual operation of a divine agency; the sovereignty which it proclaims, as regulating the dispensation of celestial mercy; the examples which it holds forth of the astonishing lowliness and self-abasement of others, so far superior to man in their mental and moral natures, such as the profound abasement of the angelic race, but especially the unparalleled humiliation of him, who, though he was in the form of God, was found in the form of a servant;—these considerations, which are all drawn from the scriptures, supply incentives to humility, which demonstrate, upon Christian principles, that pride is the most unreasonable, as well as the most unrighteous, thing in the universe. Pride is opposed, and humility is supported, by every possible view that we can take of divine revelation. An acquintance with these great principles of inspired truth, at least an experimental knowledge of them, will bring down the loftiness of men's looks, and silence the tongue of arrogant boasting. Surely, surely, he that is conversant with these things, will see little cause for self-valuation, as Mr. Hume calls pride, or for that self-publication, which is the essence of vanity.

While every true-hearted Christian is thankful that the Son of God stooped so low for his salvation, he will rejoice that his state of humiliation is past. "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father." The eclipse is over, the sun has resumed his original brightness, and the heavenly world is illuminated with his rays. That man, in whom was no form nor comeliness for which he should be desired, sits upon the throne of the universe, wearing a crown of immortal glory, and is adored by angels and by men. His humility has conducted to honour; his sorrow has

terminated in unspeakable joy. " His glory is great in thy salvation; honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him; for thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou has made him exceeding glad with thy countenance." Similar shall be the result in the case of those who follow his steps, and tread the lowly path in which he has commanded them to walk. The crown of glory is reserved for the humble, but shame shall be the reward of the proud. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

There is no operation of Christian love more beautiful, none more scarce, than this; let professing Christians set themselves to work with their own proud hearts, and their own boasting tongues, remembering that they who sink the lowest in humility in this world, shall assuredly rise the highest in honour in the world to come.

CHAPTER X.

THE DECORUM OF LOVE.

"Charity doth not behave itself unseemly."

A STATION for every person, and every person in his station; a time for everything, and everything in its time; a manner for everything, and everything in its manner;—is a compendious and admirable rule for human conduct, and seems to approach very nearly to the property of charity, which we are now to consider. There is some difficulty in ascertaining the precise idea which the Apostle intended by the original term. Perhaps the most correct rendering is "indecorously," "unbecomingly," *i. e.* unsuitably to our sex, rank, age, or circumstances. Love leads a man to know his place, and to keep it; and prevents all those deviations which, by disarranging the order, disturb the comfort, of society. This is so general and comprehensive a rule, that it would admit of application to all the various distinctions which exist in life. It is absolutely universal, and binds with equal force the monarch and the peasant, and all the numerous intermediate ranks. It imposes a consistency between a man's station and his

conduct viewed in the light of Christianity. It says to every man, "Consider your circumstances, and fulfil every just expectation to which they give rise." By the common consent of mankind, there is a certain line of conduct which belongs to every relation in life, and which cannot, perhaps, be better expressed than by the word "becomingness;" and which may be called the symmetry of the body politic. We may select a few of the more prominent distinctions of society, and see how love preserves them without giving offence.

The distinction of *male and female* is to be supported by all propriety of conduct. On the part of the man, if he be single, all trifling with the affections, all familiarity with the person, all taking advantage of the weakness of the other sex, is explicitly forbidden; as is all neglect, oppression and unkindness towards his wife, if he be married. What a horrid unseemliness is it on the part of a husband, to become either the slave or the tyrant of his wife; either in pitiful weakness to abdicate the throne of domestic government, or to make her a crouching vassal, trembling in its shadow; and how disgusting a spectacle is it to see a husband abandoning the society of his wife for the company of other females, and flirting, though, perhaps, with no criminal intention, with either single or married women. On the other hand, how unseemly in unmarried women, is a bold obtrusiveness of manner, an impudent forwardness of address, a clamorous and monopolizing strain of conversation, an evident attempt to attract the attention of the other sex. Modesty is the brightest ornament of the female character,—its very becomingness. And women, if married, should be stayers at home, and not gossips abroad; should look well to the ways of their household, and preside over its affairs in the meekness of wisdom; for domestic indolence and neglect is, in a wife and mother, most unseemly: nor is it less offensive to see the female head of a family usurping the seat of government, and reducing her husband

to the rank of mere prime minister to the queen. Women never act more unseemly than when they become busy meddling partisans, either in politics or church affairs. Nothing can be more offensive than to see a female busy-body running from house to house to raise a party, and to influence an ecclesiastical decision; forgetting that her place is home, and her duty to learn in silence of her husband. Whatever admiration has been bestowed on the heroic females of Sparta, who fought by the side of their husbands, no such eulogy can be offered to ecclesiastical heroines, whose martial ardour leads them into the arena of church contentions. Christian charity would repress all this unmeet, indecorous zeal.

Parents and guardians will be guarded by love, if they yield to its influence, from all unbecoming conduct. Fathers will neither be tyrannical nor too indulgent; will neither govern their children as slaves, with a rod of iron, nor, relaxing all discipline, throw the reins into their hands: for how incongruous is tyranny with a relation that implies the tenderest affection; and how unseemly is a cessation of rule in one who is invested by heaven with a sacred authority. Becomingness on the part of children, requires the most prompt and willing obedience, the most genuine and manifest affection, the most respectful and humble demeanour, towards parents, with the most anxious, and ingenious endeavours to promote their happiness. Everything approaching to improper familiarity, much more to pertness, most of all to refractoriness of manner, in a child towards a parent, is unbecoming in the last degree. In those cases where the high moral and intellectual qualities of parents are such as almost to *command* the exercise of filial piety from children, there is no difficulty in rendering it; but where these qualities are not possessed, there is greater danger of young persons forgetting what is due to the parental relation, and acting very improperly towards those who, whatever may be their faults, are still their parents. It is excessively unbe-

coming to hear children of any age, however matured or advanced, exposing, perhaps ridiculing, their parents' infirmities, treating their opinions with scorn, and reproving or upbraiding them to their face. Let all young people recollect, that whatever may be the character of a parent,

> "A mother is a mother still,
> The holiest thing alive."

In the distinction of *superiors and inferiors*, it is very easy to see what kind of conduct is seemly, and what is unsuitable. To the former, it will prohibit all improper familiarity—for this generates contempt and at the same time, all pride and hauteur, together with all insulting condescension. Inferiors are most tenderly alive, most keenly susceptible, to all real or supposed slights from those above them; and the feelings excited by such treatment are of the most painful kind. Pride is the most cruel of the passions, being utterly reckless of the wounds which it inflicts, the groans which it extorts, or the tears which it causes to flow. Even in its mildest exercise, by a look of scorn, by a word of insult, it often transfixes a barbed arrow in the breast of an inferior; while, by its deliberate and persevering scheme of mortification, it remorselessly crucifies the object of its contempt. O how unbecoming to employ superiority only as an eminence from whence, as, with a sort of vulture ferocity, we might pounce with greater force on a victim below. Dignified affability is the becomingness of superiority, which, while it does not remove the line of distinction, does not render it painfully visible. Love will make us cautious not to wound the feelings of others by talking to them of our superiority, or by making them in any way feel it. On the part of inferiors, it will prevent all encroaching familiarity, all presuming upon manifested kindness—all attempt, or even wish, to level the distinctions of society—all rude, uncourteous, uncivil demeanour. Some

persons seem to act as if religion removed the obligation to civility, declared war with courtesy, and involved a man in hostility with whatever things are lovely. Incivility or rudeness, manifested by the poor to the rich, by servants to masters, or by the illiterate to the well-informed, is unfriendly to the peace and good order of society, and, therefore, contrary to Christian charity.

Age and youth are also distinctions requiring a suitable or becoming line of conduct. Levity, puerility, and folly, are among the qualities which would be indecorous in the former; while obtrusiveness, forwardness, loquaciousness, and pertinacity; would be unseemly in the latter: age, to be lovely, should treat youth with kindness and forbearance; while youth should treat age with reverence, respect and deference.

These distinctions, when carried into the Church, where they exist as well as in the world, should be maintained under the most powerful influence of the holy disposition which we are now illustrating. This will teach us with all candour and impartiality to judge of our station, and to adorn it with actions that are suitable to it. Anything unbecoming is sure to give offence, and to produce discomfort. Whether our rank be high or low, we cannot violate the rule which prescribes its duties without occasioning pain.

Men are united in society like the organs and limbs in the human body; and no one, in either case, can be put out of its place without producing uneasiness in the rest. The object of love is to keep all in their proper places, and thus to promote the well-being of the whole.

There is another sense which this expression will bear, and that is, love does not allow its possessor *to act unworthy of his profession as a disciple of Christ.* Consistency is beauty; and the want of which, whatever excellences may exist, is deformity. The brightest displays of moral worth in some things, if associated with obvious and great improprieties in others, lose all

their attraction and power to edify or delight, and are the occasion of pain instead of pleasure to the spectator. The rule which the Apostle has laid down is particularly worthy of the attention of us all—"Whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *good report*, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things." It is not enough for us to acknowledge, practically, the claims of truth, purity, and justice; but we must also meet and answer every expectation which our profession and our principles have raised. Whatever is generally esteemed to be lovely—whatever is usually spoken of as excellent—whatever it be to which by general consent we attach the idea of the fair, and the honourable, and the praiseworthy,—that must a follower of Christ consider to be the matter of his duty. There is nothing good in itself, or advantageous to others—nothing that is calculated to edify by the power of example, or to bless in the way of direct energy and influence—nothing that is calculated to give pleasure, or to remove distress,—but what is implied in the very nature of true piety. Religion is the likeness of God in the soul of man; and a Christian is truly an imitator of God; hence he is called "to walk worthy of God,"—to act as becometh one who professes to bear the divine image. Let any one contemplate the moral attributes of the Deity, and think what that man ought to be who professes to give to the world a living miniature representation of this infinitely glorious Being. On the ground of consistency, he should be blameless and harmless; a follower only of that which is good; holy in all manner of conversation and godliness; a beautiful specimen of whatsoever is noble, dignified, generous, and useful. The world take us at our word: they accept our profession as the rule of their expectation; and although they often look for too much, considering the present imperfect state of human nature, yet, to a certain extent, their demands are authorized by our own declarations.

What, in reason, may not be looked for from one who professes to have received the word of Christ, the temper of heaven, the impress of eternity, the nature of God? Hence, the least deviations from rectitude are apparent in those who say such things; the least specks of imperfection are conspicuous on so bright a ground; faults stand out in bold relief and obtrusive prominence, on such a basement. Our profession invites the eye of scrutiny; we are not suffered to pass the ordeal of public opinion without the most rigid scrutiny; we are brought out from obscurity, and held up to be examined in the light of the sun. Failings, which would escape detection in others, are quickly discerned and loudly proclaimed in us: and it is, therefore, of immense consequence that we should take care what manner of persons we are. Without consistency, even our good will be evil spoken of: the least violation of this rule will attach suspicion to the most distinguished virtues, and bring discredit on the best of our actions.

A want of consistency is a violation of the law of love in various ways. *By exciting a prejudice against religion, it does harm to the souls of men;* it makes them satisfied with their state as unconverted persons, by leading them to consider every professor of a more serious regard to religion as a hypocrite. It is very true that this is unfair; that it is attending more to exceptions than the general rule; that it is giving credence to little things, and suffering them to have an influence which are denied to the greater and more prevailing parts of the character;—but as this is their way, it makes every departure from consistency on our part, not only sinful but injurious—not only guilty in the sight of God, but cruel towards man. The minor faults of Christians do more harm, in the way of hardening the hearts of sinners, than the greatest excesses of the openly wicked; for this reason, that nothing else is expected from the latter. Their conduct excites no surprise, produces no disappointment. We have not

been sufficiently aware of this: we have confined our attention too exclusively to the avoidance of open immorality—we have not directed our solicitude enough to "the whatsoever things are lovely and of good report." To the question, "What do ye more than others?" we have thought it enough to answer, "We are more pure, more true, more devotional, more zealous," without being careful to be more dignified, more honourable, more generous, in all things. Little things have been forgotten in the contemplation of great ones; secret faults have been lost sight of in the abhorrence of presumptious sins.

A want of becomingness is a violation of the law of love in another way: *it excites a prejudice* against our brethren, and involves them in our failings. By such conduct we bring suspicion upon others, and thus subject them to much undeserved obloquy. The world deals unfairly with us we admit, not only in making us thus answerable for the conduct of each other, but also in imputing only our failings; for however splendid and remarkable may be the Christian excellences that any of our number possess, however brilliant the example of a rare and eminent believer may be, they do not let his brightness fall upon the rest—he is alone in his glory; but sins are generally made imputable, and the shadow of one transgression is made to stretch, perhaps, over a whole community. What an argument is this with us all for consistency; for what cruelty is it to our brethren to involve them by our inconsistencies in unmerited reproach!

Besides, what *a grief of mind is the unworthiness of one member, to all who are associated with him in the fellowship of the Gospel.* When a member of a church has acted unbecomingly, and caused the ways of godliness to be spoken ill of, what a wound has been inflicted on the body; for if one member suffer in his reputation, all the rest must, so far as their peace is concerned, suffer with him. This is one of the finest displays of

Christian sympathy—one of the purest exhibitions of love,—of love to God, to Christ, to man, to holiness. The misconduct of their erring brother has occasioned no loss to them of worldly substance, or bodily ease, or social comfort; but it has dishonoured Christ, has injured, in public estimation, the cause of religion, and this has touched the tenderest chord of the renewed heart. What affliction has sometimes been circulated through a whole society by the unbecoming behaviour of a single member: the Apostle has given a very striking proof of this, in his representation of the feelings of the Corinthian Church, after they had taken a right view of the delinquency of the incestuous person. "For behold this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what fervent indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge!" This is only a counterpart of what often happens now, and shows that unbecomingness is a most flagrant offence against the rule of Christian love.

Unbecomingness may be considered also not only in a general point of view, but *as having a reference to our conduct towards our* BRETHREN, and may mean anything unsuitable to, or out of character with, our profession as church members.

Improper treatment of the Pastor, is obviously a want of the decorum of love. If his office be disesteemed, and his scriptural authority resisted; if attempts be made to lower him in the opinion of the church, and to deprive him of the rule with which he is invested by the Lord Jesus Christ; if his opinion is treated with disrespect, and his just influence over the feelings of his flock be undermined; if he be rudely and impertinently addressed; if he be unnecessarily opposed in his schemes for public or private usefulness; if his sermons be despised or neglected, and his ecclesiastical administration treated with suspicion or contempt; if

his temporal support be scantily or grudgingly afforded; if his comfort be not carefully consulted and assiduously built up;—there is a flagrant unbecomingness on the part of church members who are enjoined "to obey them that have the rule over them," "to esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake," "and to hold such in reputation."

Lust of power, and an ambitious desire of preponderating influence, is manifestly unbecoming in one who acknowledges himself the member of a society where all are equals, and all are the servants of a master who has thus addressed his disciples—"Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." A love of power seems almost inherent in the human bosom, and is an operation of that selfishness which enters so deeply into the essence of original sin. Nothing can be more opposed to love than this. Ambition, in its progress through its bustling and violent career, is the most unsocial and uncharitable passion that can exist. The furies are its allies, and it tramples down in its course all the charities and courtesies of life. When this disposition has taken full possession of the heart, there is no cruelty which it will hesitate to inflict, no desolation of which it will scruple to be the cause. The lesser exhibitions of this vice, and its more moderated energies, will still be attended with some proofs of its unsocial nature. Let a man once desire to be pre-eminent and predominant, as it respects influence or power, and he will not be very regardless of the feelings of those whom he desires to subjugate. It is much to be deplored, that the Christian church should ever be the field where rival

candidates for power, struggle for superiority; yet how often has this been seen to be the case, not merely in the Conclave where aspiring cardinals have put in motion all their artifice, and finesse, and duplicity, to gain the tiara; not merely amongst mitred prelates for a higher seat on the episcopal bench;—no; but amongst the lay brethren of the church. How anxious and restless have they sometimes appeared, to be leading men, influential members, the oracle of the minister, and the *ruling* elders of the church. They must not only be consulted in everything, but consulted *first*. Every plan must emanate from them, or else be approved by them before it is submitted to the rest. The Apostle has drawn their picture to the life, where he saith—"I wrote unto the church; but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words; and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."* Such an individual must be a source of discomfort to his brethren in communion. There may be no competitor with him for the sceptre who regards him with envy, but the whole community are grieved and offended with his unlovely and encroaching disposition.

There are cases, it is admitted, in which age, experience, wisdom, benevolence, and activity, are so beautifully combined in an individual, as to place him, more by general consent, than by his own efforts, above all his brethren in influence. When he openeth his mouth in wisdom, all are silent; and the pastor hearkens with the rest in respectful deference to his opinion. No one would think of proposing any scheme till he had been

* 3 John 9, 10.—It is pretty evident to me that Diotrephes was a minister; but the features of his picture apply with equal force to an ambitious and aspiring layman, whose lust of power is still more censurable, as it has not even the basis of office to rest upon.

cousulted, and his disapproval, mildly expressed, would be thought a sufficient reason for laying it aside. He has power, but it has come to him without his seeking it, and it is employed not to exhalt himself, but to benefit the church. His sway is the influence of love; and all that influence is employed by him, not to raise himself into a rival with his pastor for the upper seat in the church, but to support the authority and dignity of the pastoral office. Such men we have sometimes seen in our communities, and they have been a blessing to the people, and a comfort to the minister. If any individuals could have been found in the circle where they moved, so flippant and so forward as to treat them with the least degree of disrespect, every one besides would have been loud in the expression of their disapprobation of such an act of censurable indecorum.

Unseemliness in the conduct of a church member towards his brethren, applies *to all that is rude, unmannerly, or uncivil.* "No ill-bred man," says Dr. Adam Clark, in his comments on this word, "or what is commonly termed rude or unmannerly, is a Christian"—certainly not a consistent one. "A man may have a natural bluntness, or be a clown, and yet there may be nothing *boorish*, or *hoggish* in his manner. I must apologize for using such words, but they best express the evil against which I wish both powerfully and successfully to declaim. I never wish to meet with those who *affect* to be called 'blunt honest men;' who feel themselves above all the forms of civility and respect, and care not how many they put to pain—how many they displease. But let me not be misunderstood: I do not contend for ridiculous ceremonies, and hollow compliments: there is surely a *medium;* and a sensible Christian man will not be long at a loss to find it out. Even *that* people who profess to be above all worldly forms, and are generally *stiff* enough, yet are rarely found to be rude, uncivil, or ill bred." There is much good sense in these remarks, that deserves the atten-

tion of all professing Christians who have the credit of religion and the comfort of their brethren at heart. It is inconceivable what a great degree of unnecessary distress is occasioned by a disregard of this rule; and how many hearts are continually bleeding, from the wounds inflicted by incivility and rudeness. We should be careful to avoid this; for religion gives no man a release from the courtesies of life. In our *private intercourse* with our brethren, we should be anxious to give no offence. If we feel it our duty at any time, as we may, and ought to expostulate with a brother on the impropriety of his conduct, we should be most studiously cautious to abstain from all appearance of what is impertinently officious, or offensively blunt. Reproof, or even expostulation, is rarely palatable, even when administered with the honied sweetness of Christian kindness; but it is wormwood and gall when mingled up with uncourteousness, and will generally be rejected with disdain and disgust. We must never think of acting the part of a reprover, till we have put on humility as a garment, and taken up the law of kindness in our lips.

Nothing is more likely to lead to incivility, than *repeated and vexatious interruptions*, when engaged in some interesting or important business, or required to comply with unreasonable requests. I have known cases in which, when application has been made for what the applicant thought to be a very reasonable matter, his request has been treated with such scorn, and denied with such abruptness and coarseness of manner, as to send him home with an arrow in his heart; when a few moments spent in explanation, or a denial given in kind and respectful language, would have completely satisfied him. It is admitted that it is somewhat trying, and it is a trial of very common occurrence in the present day, to be called from important occupations to listen to tales of wo, or read the statement of want, or answer the inquiries of ignorance: but still we must not

be, ought not to be, rude. Sudden interruptions are apt to throw a man off his guard: he has scarcely time to call into exercise his principles, before his passions are up and busy. It is said of Mr. Romaine, that he was one day called upon by a poor woman in distress of soul, for the purpose of gaining instruction and consolation. The good man was busy in his study; and on being informed that a poor woman wanted to converse with him below, exclaimed, with great incivility of manner, "Tell her I cannot attend to her." The humble applicant, who was within hearing of the reception her case had met with, said, "Ah, Sir! your master would not have treated thus a burdened penitent who came to him for mercy." "No, no," replied the good man, softened by an appeal which his heart could not resist, "he would not; come in, come in!" Too, too often has the same petulant indecorum been manifested by others, without being accompanied by the same reparation: they have pierced the heart and left the wound to fester: the petitioners have carried away from their door their misery, not only unrelieved but greatly aggravated. But there is a peculiar sensitiveness on the subject of pecuniary contributions in some persons; to ask for them is an offence, which they pay back in insult.* They are the Nabals of the Church—

* I must here specify the applications which are so frequent in the present day for the support of churches and public institutions. I am aware that the bells and knockers of some persons doors are rarely silent long together, or their parlours and counting-houses rarely free from "beggars" a single hour of any day: I am also aware how trying it is to be called away from occupations of importance to attend to such cases; but even this does not justify a man for going into a passion at the sight of a red book and a black coat, and almost ordering the bearer off the premises as an impostor or vagrant. Let such persons ask, whether it is not misery enough to pace the streets of a city or large town, and, at the end of a long day's weary pilgrimage, have to count up far more "negatives" than pounds? I have never known by experience, but I have heard by reports, the sorrows of beggars; and from regard to common humanity, as well as from a wish to save the ministerial character from degradation, I do most ardently desire some

if, indeed, the Church could have a Nabal. What can be more unseemly than words which would disgrace a man, dropping,—dropping! no flowing in a stream,—from the lips of a professing Christian.

Unbecoming rudeness should be most sedulously avoided in our *public intercourse with the church*, and in our social circles, when meeting as brethren. Every thing of flat contradiction, of unwarrantable suspicion concerning the truth of a statement; all seeming contempt for the opinions of others; all attempts to inter-

scheme, in place of the present mode of raising money from rich Christians, to help the necessities of their poorer brethren. But till that scheme shall be devised—and I am afraid the time is far distant which shall produce it,—let me plead for civility towards those who are still doomed to bear the yoke of bondage. "Forasmuch as ye did it unto one of the *least* of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." So says Christ of his brethren, and says it in reference both to benefits and neglects. When popular men travel from place to place, many houses are open to receive them—many tables spread to entertain them. They meet with no rudeness, no unkindness. But this is for *their own* sakes. Our regard for Christ is proved by our conduct to the *least*, not to the *greatest*, of his brethren. And are the *great* ministers free from all blame in reference to their conduct towards their humble brethren? They are glad to entertain the popular favourites of the day—the men of name or talents; but how do they behave to the

"Multi præterea quos fama obscura recondit?

Do they not order these to be sent away from their door without an audience, or keep them long waiting for an interview, and then dismiss the good man, sorrowfully exclaiming, "Am I not thy brother?"

Whilst we cheerfully accord the sentiments expressed in the above note, we still think there is need for the exercise of *Christian Charity* on the part of those, who make applications for aid. Forgetting that the benevolent are *frequently* called upon, and that they have a *right* to regulate their subscriptions; agents are strongly tempted to question the liberality of, and to impute wrong motives to those, who do not contribute as largely as was anticipated. Whilst there are causes justly claiming the aid of the benevolent in our cities; still there is a radical evil in the custom so prevalent in this day, of hastening to the cities to build churches in the country. As a general fact it will be found true, that communities are able BY PROPER EFFORT AND DUE ECONOMY to provide suitable houses of worship for themselves.

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rupt or bear down, by clamour and vehemence, those with whom we may be engaged in discussion, should be very anxiously abstained from. It is truly painful to observe what an utter disregard for the feelings of their brethren is often manifested by some ardent sticklers for their own opinions and plans. But is not civility a Christian grace? Did not the apostle say, Be courteous? Why should that which is considered by the world as a rich decoration of character, as softening and embellishing the intercourse of society, and as so important and necessary as to be placed under the guardianship of what is called the law of honour, and to be avenged, for the slightest violation of it, by the punishment of death;—why should this ever be considered as of little moment in the business of religion and the fellowship of the faithful? If rudeness be considered as a blemish upon talents, rank, fame, must it not be viewed also as a blot and deformity upon piety? Most certainly it is regarded as such by charity, whose anxiety to do whatever would give pleasure, and to avoid whatever would occasion distress, is not greater than its delicate perception of every thing that will contribute to this end.

We see in this subject the wonderful excellence of Christianity, as a code of morals, a rule of conduct, and a body of principles; for in addition to specific laws, intended to operate in the production of certain virtues, and the prevention of certain vices, it has general and comprehensive precepts, capable of universal application, of so plain a nature as to be understood by the dullest intellect, and possessing, at the same time, a kind of beauty, which gives them an interest in every heart; so that if in the specialities of Christian morals, properly so called, any case should be overlooked, or any situation should not be reached —any distinction between virtue and vice should be so minute as to be imperceptible—any delicacy of character so refined as not to be taken into the account,—here is something to supply the defect, and render the

law of God perfect for converting the soul. Love does not act unbecomingly; and who is so ignorant, if he would but consult his conscience, as not to know what would be thought by others unbecoming in himself?

CHAPTER XI.

THE DISINTERESTEDNESS OF LOVE.

"Charity, seeketh not her own."

If it were required to give a brief and summary description of man's original apostacy, we might say, that it was his departure from God,—the fountain of his happiness, and the end of his existence,—and retiring into himself as the ultimate end of all his actions: and if it were also asked, what is the essence of his sin, the sum of his moral depravity, we might say, to love himself supremely, to seek himself finally and exclusively, to make self, in one shape or another, the centre to which all his busy thoughts, anxious cares, and diligent pursuits constantly tend. Self-love is the most active and reigning principle in fallen nature; self is the great idol which mankind are naturally disposed to worship; and selfishness the grand interest to which they are devotedly attached. But the grace of God, when it renews the heart, so corrects and subdues this disposition, that it is no longer the ascendant of the mind; and plants in the human bosom the principle of benevolence—a principle which as it leads us to love God supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves, is the direct contrary of selfishness.

Believing that the perfection of virtue lies in disinterested love, it follows, that the nearer we approach to this state of mind, the nearer we come to sinless moral excellence. This is the temper of the innumerable company of angels—of the spirits of just men made perfect. It has been argued, that we take delight in the happiness of others, because their happiness increases our own: but the circumstance of our happiness being increased by promoting theirs, is itself a convincing proof of the existence and exercise of an antecedent good will towards them. Our felicity is raised by theirs. Why?—because we love them. Why am I made unhappy by the sight of another's wo?—because I have good will to the subject of distress. It is true I am gratified by relieving him, and my comfort would be disturbed if I did not; but what is the origin of these feelings?—certainly a previous good will towards them. It is not affirmed, that all pity proceeds from holy love; but that where love does exist, and in the proportion in which it exists, it is disinterested and is distinguished from selfishness. It may be proper here to distinguish between self-love and selfishness; not that they are essentially different, but only in the use of the terms as they are employed in common discourse.

By selfishness, we mean such a regard to our own things, as is inconsistent with, and destructive of, a right regard to the things of others: whereas by self-love, we mean nothing more than that attention to our own affairs which we owe to ourselves as part of universal being. Selfishness means the neglect or injury of others, in order to concentrate our views, and desires, and pursuits in ourselves; while self-love means only that proper and due regard to our own interests which we may pay, without the neglect or injury of our neighbour.

Self-love, when exercised in connexion with, and subordinate to, good will to mankind, as it may be, is not only consistent with virtue, but is a part of it; but when not thus connected, it degenerates into selfishness.

Selfishness leads men to seek their own interests in *opposition* to the interests of others. Multitudes care not whom they oppress, so as they can establish their own power; whom they vilify and degrade so as they can increase their own fame; whom they impoverish, so as they can accumulate their own wealth; whom they distress, so as they can augment their own comforts. This is the worst and most cruel operation of selfishness. It is the same propensity, only sharpened, and guided, and rendered the more mischievous, by the aid of reason, as that which exists in the vulture and the tiger, and which gorges itself to repletion, deaf to the piercing cries of the helpless victim which struggles in its talons.

Intent only on gratification, it riots amidst misery, if by this means it can aggrandize itself. Looking on the possessions of those around only with an envious eye, it is solicitous that they may be appropriated in some way to itself. This is a horrible and truly infernal disposition; for it would reign with a kind of universal despotism, would subdue all into vassalage, and suffer nothing to exist, but what was tributary to its own comfort.

Selfishness sometimes causes its subjects only to *neglect* the things of others. They do not oppress, or injure, or despoil; they are neither robbers nor calumniators; but they are so engrossed by self-interest, and so absorbed in self-gratification, as to be utterly regardless of the miseries or comfort of which they cannot but be the spectators. They have no sympathies, no benevolent sensibilities; they have cut themselves off from their species, and care nothing for the happiness of any of their neighbours. Their highest boast and attainment in virtue is, to wrong none: their idea of excellence is purely of a negative kind; to dispel sorrow, to relieve want, to diffuse gladness, especially to make sacrifices; to do this, is an effort which they have never tried, and which they have no inclination to try. The world might perish, if the desolation did not reach

them. Miserable and guilty creatures, they forget that they will be punished for not doing good, as well as for doing evil. The *unprofitable* servant was condemned; and the wicked are represented, at the last day, as doomed to hell, not for inflicting sorrow, but for not relieving it.

A man is guilty of selfishness, if he seeks his own things *out of all proportion* to the regard he pays to the things of others.

If, from a regard to our reputation, we cannot live in the total neglect of those around us, and, in deference either to public opinion, or to the remonstrances of our consciences, we are compelled to yield *something* to the claims of the public; yet, at the same time, our concessions may be so measured in quantity, and made with such reluctance and ill will, that our predominant selfishness may be as clearly manifested by what we give, as by what we withhold. That which we call our liberality, manifests, in this case, our avarice; that which we denominate generosity, demonstrates our sinful self-love.

Selfishness sometimes seeks its own, *under the pretence and profession of promoting the happiness of others.* Where the ruling passion of the heart is the love of applause, large sacrifices of wealth, and time, and ease, and feeling, will be readily made for fame; and where men have objects to gain, which require kindness, conciliation, and attention, nothing in this way is too much to be done to accomplish their purpose. This is a disgusting operation of this very disgusting temper, when all its seeming good will is but an efflux of kindness, which is to flow back again, in full tide, into the receptacle of self. Many are the detestable traders, whose generosity is only a barter for something in return. How much of the seeming goodness of human nature, of the sympathy with human wo, of the pity for want, of the anxiety for the comfort of wretchedness, which passes current for virtue among mankind, is nothing better than a counterfeit imitation of benevolence,—is

known only to that God whose omniscient eye traces the secret workings of our depravity through all the labyrinths of a deceitful heart.

But notice now the *subjects*, in reference to which selfishness is indulged.

Property is the first. It shows itself in an anxiety to obtain wealth, and an unwillingness to part with it; a disposition greedy as the sea, and barren as the shore. You will see some men so excessively eager to get profit, that they are ever watching to take undue advantage, and so keen-eyed in looking after their own, that they need be closely inspected, to prevent them from taking *more* than their own: for a man who is prevailingly selfish, can hardly be honest. And what they gain, they keep: neither the cause of humanity, nor of religion, can extort money from them, except now and then, to get rid of an importunate suitor, or to prevent their reputation from being utterly ruined.

It is sometimes exercised in reference to *opinion*. Some will not bear contradiction; they must be listened to as sages; to question what they say is to insult them, and is sure to bring down upon the presumptuous sceptic their contempt or their frown. They will scarcely allow any one to speak but themselves; they must be the oracle of every company and the director of every affair, or they retire in disgust, and refuse to act at all. In the concerns of our churches, this is often seen and felt. What is it but pure selfishness, that leads any one to wish that *he* should dictate to the rest; that *his* opinion should be law; and *his* wishes be consulted and obeyed? This is not love; no, love gives up her own, where conscience does not interfere to forbid it, and meekly and quietly resigns its wishes to increase peace and promote harmony: its object is the public good, and its law is, the best means of promoting the general welfare. If in the intercourse of life, or the affairs of a church, every individual determined to consult only his own views and wishes, society would be dissolved, and its separate parts embroiled in a state of mutual conflict. In the various discussions which

come before a public body, Selfishness says, "I am sure my opinion is correct; and I will, if possible, have my way:" but the language of Love is, "I have stated my opinion and my wishes; if the former does not carry conviction, I by no means wish it to be adopted, nor my desires to be gratified, I am anxious for the comfort of my brethren, and I yield my wishes to theirs."

Some persons have acquired habits in their general conduct, which are exceedingly annoying to others; they have sources of personal gratification, peculiarities of humour, in which it is impossible to indulge, without greatly incommoding those around them: but so detestably selfish is their disposition, at least with regard to these practices, that let who will be disturbed, offended, or put to serious inconvenience, they will not forego, in the least degree, their accustomed indulgence. When the unfortunate sufferers were expiring in the Black Hole at Calcutta, and entreated the centinels to represent their agonizing and fatal condition to the tyrant who had imprisoned them, the guards answered, "No; he is enjoying his repose, and it will be certain death to us if we disturb him, even for your relief." And what better in principle, though certainly a less degree of its operation, is that regard to their appetite, ease, or humour, which many indulge to the annoyance of their neighbours, and which they indulge against the remonstrances of those who suffer? In short, that regard to our comfort which leads us to neglect or sacrifice the felicity of another, let the object to which it is directed be what it may, is the selfishness which kindness opposes and destroys.

This hateful disposition has contrived to conceal itself under many false names and disguises, and thus to find protection from much of the obloquy which it deserves, and which would otherwise be more unsparingly heaped upon it.

The plea of *frugality*, or a just regard to the claims of a family, has often been urged as an excuse for the selfishness of avarice. A man certainly must take care

of his own, but not to the injury, or even to the neglect, of all besides. "I have no more," it is often said, "than I want for my style of living; and that style I think necessary for my rank in life. I spend all I get upon my family, and hoard nothing; how, then, can I be selfish?" Mistaken mortal! do you forget that a man's family, is himself multiplied—himself reflected. Selfish! yes, you are detestably so, if you spend all upon yourself and family, however lavish and unsparing you may be to them.

No expression, no sentiment, has ever been more abused than that of the apostle—"*Do all to the glory of God.*" It has been employed to disguise the most improper motives, and never more frequently, nor more profanely employed, than when it has been used to give a character of religious zeal to actions which every eye could discern originated in an unmixed selfishness. It is to be feared, that when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, it will be found that, while much has been *professedly* done for the glory of God in the affairs of religion, pure zeal for God's glory is a very rare thing. Certain it is, that much of what has been carried on under the authority of this truly sublime phrase, has emanated from a far less hallowed principle. The Gospel has been preached by ministers; places of worship have been built by hearers; distant lands have been visited by missionaries: yea, imprisonment and death may have been sought by martyrs, in some cases, not from pure zeal for God's glory, but under the influence of selfishness. All sorts of artful practices have been supported, all kinds of stormy passions have been indulged, all kinds of injuries have been inflicted,—under the pretence of glorifying God; but which, in fact, are to be ascribed to this disposition. When a man is identified with a party, that party is himself, and what he does for the one, he does for the other.

The same remarks will apply to many of those actions which are performed on the *professed ground of regard for the public good.* Pure patriotism is a scarce virtue, and is found but rarely in the breasts of those

who are loudest in their praises and professions of it. Many a noisy and self-eulogized patriot—many a zealous supporter of public institutions—many an active reformer of popular errors—many a liberal contributor to humane or religious societies—could their motives be exposed, would be found to act from no higher aims than to get a name for themselves, and to be praised by their fellow creatures.

Some indulge this disposition under the pretext of *regard for the truth.* Attaching an overweening importance to their own opinions, as if they possessed the attribute of infallibility, overbearing in debate, impatient of contradiction, determined to crush the opinions and resist the influence of those who are opposed to theirs,—they quiet their conscience, and silence the voice of remonstrance, with the plea that their vehemence is pure zeal for the interests of truth. They should be less anxious, they say, if it were their personal interest at stake; but they have a right to be earnest, yea, even contentious, in defence of the faith. But they know not themselves, or they would discern that their conduct springs from a proud, imperious, and selfish spirit.

It is time to contemplate the *evil* of selfishness. It is a direct opposition to the divine benevolence, and is contrary to the habitual temper of our Lord Jesus Christ, "who pleased not himself." It is the cause of all sin, the opposite of all holiness and virtue; is the source of innumerable other sins, and is placed by the apostle as the head and leader of the eighteen vices which he enumerates as the marks of perilous times, "Men shall be lovers of themselves." This was the sin which introduced all guilt and misery into the world; for the first transgression, by which Adam fell from innocence, and by which his posterity fell with him, was an effort to raise himself into a state of independence; by selfishness, he laid the world under the burden of the divine condemnation. It is a rejection of all the claims, and an opposition to all the ends and interests, of society; for if all persons were under the influence of predominant selfishness, society could scarcely exist; let each

one covet and grasp his own, to the injury or neglect of the rest, and the world becomes a den of wild beasts, where each ravins for his prey, and all worry one another. This disposition defeats its own end. God has endowed us with social affections, in the indulgence of which there is real pleasure: the exercise of kindness and the enjoyment of delight are inseparable. "If there be any comfort of love," says the apostle: by which he implied, in the strongest manner, that there is great comfort in it; and, of course, in proportion as we extend the range and multiply the objects of our love, we extend the range and multiply the sources of our happiness. He that loves only himself, has only one joy; he that loves his neighbours, has many. To rejoice in the happiness of others, is to make it our own; to produce it, is to make it more than our own. Lord Bacon has justly remarked, that our sorrows are lessened, and our felicities multiplied, by communication. Mankind had been labouring for ages under the grossest mistake as to happiness, imagining that it arose from receiving; an error which our Lord corrects, by saying, "That it is more blessed to give, than to receive." A selfish man who accumulates property, but diffuses not, resembles not the perennial fountain, sending forth fertilizing streams; but the stagnant pool, into which, whatever flows remains there, and whatever remains, corrupts: miser is his name, and miserable he is in disposition. Selfishness often brings a terrible retribution in this world: the tears of its wretched subject fall unpitied; and he finds, in the gloomy hour of his want or his wo, that he who determines to be alone in his fulness, will generally be left to himself in his sorrows: and that he who, in the days of his prosperity, drives every one from him by the unkindness of his disposition, will find, in the season of his adversity, that they are too far off to hear his cries for assistance.

This is not an *incurable* temper: but it is a disease that requires immediate and diligent attention. Where it not only exists but predominates, the spring of human action must be renewed by regeneration, and we must

have that new heart, which is brought to love God supremely, and our neighbour as ourselves. We must meditate often upon the deep criminality of this disposition, and look upon it in all its deformity, till we hate it: being careful, in order to this, to strip it of all the disguises which the deceitfulness of the heart has thrown over it. We must abound in contemplation of the character of God, as infinite in love, and of Jesus Christ as an incarnation of pure disinterested affection. We must exercise great mortification, labouring to the uttermost to subdue, and if possible to eradicate, this vile disposition; and repeating this again and again, till we begin to taste the pleasure, and to feel the habit, of kindness: at the same time praying earnestly for the help of the Holy Spirit, to assist us in the mighty work of vanquishing a selfish temper.

CHAPTER XII.

THE UNSUSPICIOUSNESS OF LOVE.

"Charity thinketh no evil."

THERE are two senses which may be attached to this beautiful description of love.

I. It does not *devise* evil. What a horrible demon-like disposition has the Psalmist ascribed to the individual who has no fear of God before his eyes!—"He hath left off to be wise and to do good; he deviseth mischief upon his bed." Such is the delineation given by the inspired writer of the character of some wretched men; and the original is often to be found. They are perpetually scheming to do injury; even their hours of rest are devoted to the impulses of a wicked heart, and they sleep not except they have done mischief. Instead of communing with God upon their bed, this is to commune with the devil, and to hold nightly conference with him who goeth about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But without going to the extent of those who live by plunder, extortion, or oppression, and who, as the wolves and tigers of society are ever prowling about for their prey,—there are many who maintain a tolerably respectable character, but are still far too busy in devising evil: this may arise from

various motives, to all of which Christian love stands firmly opposed.

Desire of gain may lead them to devise means by which they may injure a more prosperous neighbour, a more thriving tradesman, than themselves. They cannot endure to witness his success, and leave no effort untried to hinder it. They are inventive in the way of insinuation, inuendo, or explicit declaration, to check the tide of his good fortune, and are ever scheming to circumvent and injure him. Or they may be moved by envy, *to devise means for blasting the reputation of a popular rival*, or at least to render him less a favourite with the public. Revenge is ever busy in laying plans to injure its object; it broods in wrathful silence over the real or supposed injury, and looks round on every side for the opportunity and the means of full retaliation. *A love of sporting with the fears of the timid and the weak* has led some to delight in finding means for exciting their alarms: they do not desire to inflict pain so much from a malignity of disposition as from a wanton pleasure in raising a joke. Such jests as occasion distress, are, whatever may be pretended by their authors, a kind of devil's play, who can never relax from the work of tormenting, except it be to occasion lighter pains, and whose very sport is the infliction of misery. It is dreadful that the human intellect should ever be employed in devising evil: and yet, passing by the cabinets of statesmen, where hostile and unprincipled aggressions are so often planned against a weaker state; and the closets of monarchs, where schemes which are to entail the horrors of war upon millions are contrived without compunction; and the slave-merchant's cabin, where the details are arranged for burning peaceful villages, and dragging into captivity their unoffending inhabitants; and the robber's cave, the murderer's chamber, and the swindler's retreat;—passing by these haunts of demons, where the master-spirits of mischief hold their conclave, and digest their dark and horrid purposes;—what a prodigious movement of mind is perpetually going on among the subalterns! What a frightful

portion of every day's employment of the mental and bodily energies, all over the globe, is seen by the eye of Omniscience, directed by the parent of evil, who is ever going about to *do* evil; so that a great part of mankind seem to have no other prototype but the scorpions which John saw rising out of the bottomless pit, armed both with teeth and stings!

To all these persons, and to all this their conduct, love is diametrically opposed. It thinketh not evil, but good; it deviseth to communicate pleasure, not pain. It shrinks back with instinctive abhorrence from inflicting a moment's suffering, in body or in mind. "Love worketh no ill to its neighbour," but employs all its counsels and its cares for his benefit. Like a good spirit, it is ever opposing the advice, and counteracting the influence, of envy, revenge, or avarice. It would make the miserable happy, and the happy still happier. It retires into the closet, to project schemes for blessing mankind, and then goes out into the crowded regions of want and wretchedness, to execute them: it deviseth good on its bed, and riseth in the morning to fulfil the plans of mercy with which it had sunk to rest. "Love thinketh no evil."

II. But probably the apostle meant, that it does not *impute* evil. Lovely charity! the farther we go, the more we discover thy charms: thy beauty is such, that it is seen the more, the more closely it is inspected; and thy excellence such, that it never ceases to grow upon acquaintance. Thou art not in haste to criminate as if it were thy delight to prove men wicked: but art willing to impute a good motive to men's actions, till a bad one is clearly demonstrated.

It is proper, however, to remark here, that love is not quite blind: it is not, as we have already said, virtue in its dotage—having lost its power of discrimination between good and evil; nor is it holiness in its childhood, which, with puerile simplicity, believes every thing that is told it, and that is imposed upon by every pretender. No; it is moral excellence in the maturity of all its faculties—in the possession of all its manly

strength. Like the judge upon the bench, penetrating yet not censorious, holding the balance with an even hand, acting as counsel for the prisoner, rather leaning to the side of the accused than to that of the accuser, and holding him innocent till he is proved to be guilty.

There are some persons of a peculiarly suspicious temper, who look with a distrustful eye upon every body and upon every action. It would seem as if the world were in a conspiracy against them, and that every one who approached them came with a purpose of mischief. They invert the proper order of things; and instead of imputing a good motive till a bad one is proved, impute a bad one till a good one is made apparent; and so extremely skeptical are they on the subject of moral evidence, that what comes with the force of demonstration to the rest of mankind, in the way of establishing the propriety of an action, scarcely amounts, in their view, to probability. Those who suspect every body, are generally to be suspected themselves. Their knowledge of human nature has been obtained at home, and their fears in reference to their neighbours are the reflected images of their own disposition. But without going to this length, we are all too apt to impute evil to others.

1. We are too forward *to suspect the piety of our neighbours*, and to ascribe, if not direct hypocrisy, yet ignorance, or presumption, as the ground of their profession. Upon some very questionable, or imperfect evidence—upon some casual expression, or some doubtful action—we pronounce an individual to be a self-deceiver or a hypocrite. There is far too much proneness to this in the religious world; too much haste in excluding each other from the body of Christ; too much precipitancy in cutting each other off from the immunities of the Christian church. To decide infallibly upon character, is not only the prerogative of the Deity, but requires his attributes. There may be some grains of wheat hid among the chaff, which we may be at a loss to discover. We must be careful how we set up our views or our experience, as the test of

character, so as to condemn all who do not come up to our standard. It is a fearful thing to unchristianize any one, and it should be done only upon the clearest evidence of his being in an unconverted state. Without being accused with lax or latitudinarian views, I may observe that we should make great allowance for the force of education, for peculiar habits acquired in circumstances different from our own, and for a phraseology learnt among those whose views are but imperfect. To impute to a professor of religion the sin of hypocrisy, or mere formality, and to deny the reality of his religion altogether, is too serious a thing for such short-sighted creatures as we are, except in cases which are absolutely indisputable.

2. We are too prone to impute *bad motives in reference to particular actions.* Sometimes, where the action is good, we ascribe it to some sinister or selfish inducement operating in the mind of him by whom it is performed. This is not unfrequently done where we have no contention with the individual, and the imputation is merely the effect of envy; but it is more frequently done in cases where we have personal dislike. When the action is of a doubtful nature, how apt are we to lose sight of all the evidence which may be advanced in favour of its being done from a *good* motive, and with far less probability decide that the motive is *bad.* If we are the object of the action, we too commonly conclude instantly, and almost against evidence, that a bad motive dictated it. Although the circumstance is at worst equivocal, and admits of a two-fold interpretation, we promptly determine that an insult or an injury was intended, when every one but ourselves clearly discerns that no such design can be fairly imputed. A person passes us in the street without speaking, and we immediately believe that it was an act of intentional insult—forgetting that it is probable he did not see us, or was so immersed in thought as not to recognize us. A general remark is made in conversation, which we suppose with no other evidence than its applicability to us, was intended to expose us before the company, when,

perhaps the individual who made it had no more reference to us than to a man on the other side of the globe. A thousand cases might be mentioned, and in which, of two motives that may be imputed, we choose the evil one. If a person has previously injured us, we are peculiarly propense to this unchristian practice of thinking evil of him. We can scarcely allow ourselves to believe that he can do any thing relating to us, but from an improper inducement; we suspect all his words and all his actions; nor is the propensity less strong in those cases where we have been the aggressors; we then set down everything done by the injured person to the influence of revenge.

The evil of such a disposition is manifest. *It is explicitly and frequently prohibited in God's Word.* This is the censoriousness forbidden by our Lord, where he says, "Judge not, that ye be not judged;" and which is condemned by Paul, where he says, "Judge nothing before the time until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." James commands us "Not to speak evil one of another; for he that speaketh evil of his brother, judgeth his brother." "Evil surmisings" are placed by the Apostle among the sins which oppose the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is an invasion of the prerogative of Deity, who alone can search the heart, and read the motives of the breast. It is injurious to the character of our brethren, and disturbs the peace of society. Half of the broils which arise in the world, and of the schisms which spring up in the church, may be traced to this wicked propensity of "thinking evil;" for if men *think* evil, it is an easy step to *speak* evil, and then to *do* evil: so that the origin of many quarrels will be found in the false impressions of a suspicious mind—the misapprehension of a censorious judgment. It is a disposition *which our own observation and experience are quite sufficient, if we would be guided by them, to correct.* How often, how very often, have we found ourselves mista-

ken in this matter! How frequently has subsequent evidence shown us our error in imputing a bad motive to an action, which, at the time, to say the worst of it, was only of a doubtful character! We have discovered that, to have originated in accident, which we once thought to have been the result of design; and have found that, to have proceeded from ignorance, which we had hastily set down to malice. How many times have we blushed and grieved over our precipitancy, and yet, in opposition to our experience and to our resolutions, we still go on to think evil.

But "love thinketh no evil:" this divine virtue delights to speak well and think well of others: she talks of their good actions, and says little or nothing, except when necessity compels her, of their bad ones. She holds her judgment in abeyance as to motives, till they are perfectly apparent. She does not look round for evidence to prove an evil design, but hopes that what is doubtful will, by farther light, appear to be correct; she imputes not evil, so long as good is probable; she leans to the side of candour rather than to that of severity; she makes every allowance that truth will permit; looks at all the circumstances which can be pleaded in mitigation; suffers not her opinions to be formed till she has had opportunity to escape from the mist of passion, and to cool from the wrath of contention. Love desires the happiness of others; and how can she be in haste to think evil of them?

If it be asked, Do all good men act thus? I again reply, They act thus just in proportion as they are under the influence of Christian charity. The Apostle does not say that every man who is possessed of charity does so, but that charity itself thinketh no evil; and therefore implies that every good man will act thus in the same degree in which he submits to the influence of this virtue. Divine grace! hasten thy universal reign on earth, and put an end to those evil surmisings by which the comfort of mankind and the fellowship of the saints are so much disturbed!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE JOY OF LOVE.

"Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

KEEPING up the personification of love as presented by the Apostle, we may observe that it has its joys and its sorrows; and its smiles and its tears are the expressions of good will—the tokens of benevolence. We are first told in what it does *not* take complacency—"It rejoiceth not in iniquity."

Sin is, in itself, an evil of enormous magnitude. As committed against a Being whom we are under infinite obligation to love, and serve, and glorify, it must partake of infinite degrees of demerit. It is a violation of that law which, as an emanation from the perfection of the Deity, is itself perfect, and well deserves the eulogium pronounced upon it by the Apostle, when he declares it to be "holy, and just, and good." As this is the rule of government to the moral universe, and intended to preserve its order, dependence, and harmony; sin, by opposing its authority, disturbs this order, breaks this dependence, and seeks to introduce the reign of confusion and misery. None, but the infinite mind, is competent to calculate the mischief which is likely to be produced by a single act of sin, if left to itself without a remedy, or without a punishment. We have only to

see what sin has done, to judge of its most evil and hateful nature. All the misery which either is or ever will be on earth, or in hell, is the result of sin. It is the greatest evil—the only evil in the universe. It is the opposite, and the enemy to God; the contrast to all that is pure and glorious in his divine attributes, and ineffably beautiful perfections; and, as such, it is that which he cannot but hate with a perfect hatred. It is not merely the opposite of his nature, but the opponent of his government—the rebel principle that disputes with him for his seat of majesty and the dominion of the universe, saying to him, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther;" seeking to cast him down from the throne which he hath prepared in the heavens, and to rise, with impious usurpation, into the holy place of the high and lofty One. Sin would thus stop the fountain of life and blessedness, by ending the reign of infinite beneficence; and is, therefore, the enemy of everything that constitutes the felicity of the various orders of rational existence. The happiness of angels and archangels, of cherubim and seraphim, and of the spirits made perfect above, as well as of those who are renewed by the grace of God on earth, arises from holiness; separate and apart from holiness, there can be no happiness for an intellectual being. Now sin is the contrary of holiness, and thus the enemy of happiness. How, then, can love delight in iniquity? If it wills the felicity of rational beings, it must hate that which directly resists and extinguishes it.

And as it cannot delight in *sin in the abstract*, so neither can it take pleasure *in committing it:* for whoever commits it, in so far approves of it, upholds its dominion, extends its reign, diffuses its mischief, and does all he can to recommend it. If his transgression be a common one, he gives the patronage of his example to all of the same kind; and if it be a new one, he becomes an inventor and propagator upon earth of a fresh curse and tormentor. That many do delight in committing iniquity cannot be doubted; they follow it with greediness, and drink it in as the thirsty ox drinketh in

water. The Scripture speaks of the joys of fools, and of the pleasures of sin. Horrid as is the association between sin and gratification, it certainly exists. Some men have gone so far as to be self-murderers, but who ever took *pleasure* in the act of destroying themselves? Whoever drank the poison, as he would wine, with a merry heart? Whoever dallied in sportive pleasure with the pistol or the dagger, or wound the cord in jocularity round his throat before he strangled himself with it? Whoever went skipping with a light fantastic step to the edge of the precipice, or the brink of the river, from which he was about to plunge into eternity? And yet sinners do all this, in reference to their souls. They commit self-murder, the murder of their immortal spirits, to the song of the drunkard, the noise of music, the smile of a harlot, and the laugh of the fool. They sin, and not only so, but *delight* in iniquity. So does not charity.

Nor can it delight *in the sins of others.* It cannot do as fools do, "make a mock of sin." It is most horrid to find pastime and sport in those acts of transgression by which men ruin their souls. Some laugh at the reeling gait, and idiot looks, and maniac gestures, of the drunkard, whom, perhaps, they have first led on to intoxication, to afford them merriment; or they are diverted by the oaths of the swearer, whose malice and revenge are at work to invent new forms of profanity; or they are made merry by the mischief with which the persecutors of the righteous often oppose and interrupt the solemnity of worship; or they attack, with raillery and scorn, the tender consciences of the saints, and loudly applaud the wit which aims its sharpened arrows against religion. But love weeps over sin, as that which brings the greatest misery. "For sin is the greatest and highest infelicity of the creature, depraves the soul within itself, vitiates its powers, deforms its beauty, extinguishes its light, corrupts its purity, darkens its glory, disturbs its tranquillity and peace, violates its harmonious joyful state and order, and destroys its very life. It disaffects it to God, severs it from him, engages his jus-

tice and influences his wrath against it. What! to rejoice in sin, that despites the Creator, and hath wrought such tragedies in the creation!—that turned angels out of heaven, man out of paradise!—that hath made the blessed God so much a stranger to our world; broken off the intercourse in so great a part, between heaven and earth; obstructed the pleasant commerce which had otherwise probably been between angels and men; so vilely debased the nature of man, and provoked the displeasure of his Maker towards him!—that once overwhelmed the world with a deluge of water, and will again ruin it by a destructive fire! To rejoice in so hateful a thing as sin, is to do that mad part, to cast about firebrands, arrows and death, and say, "Am I not in sport?"—it is to be glad that such an one is turning a man into a devil! a reasonable, immortal soul, capable of heaven, into a fiend of hell!—to be glad that such a soul is tearing itself off from God, is blasting its own eternal hopes, and destroying all its possibilities of a future well being. Blessed God! how opposite a thing is this to charity—the offspring of God! The birth of heaven, as it is here below, among mortals; the beauty and glory of it, as it is there above, in its natural seal. The eternal bond of living union among the blessed spirits that inhabit there, and which would make our world, did it universally obtain here, another heaven."*

No: it is the sport of devils, not of men who feel the influence of love, to delight in sin. We justly condemn the cruelty of the Romans, in glutting their eyes with the scenes of the amphitheatre, where the gladiators were torn in pieces by the fangs of lions and tigers; but theirs was innocent recreation, compared with that of the perverted and wicked mind, which can be gratified by seeing an immortal creature ruining and damning his most precious soul. Go, laugh at the agonies of the wretched man tortured upon the rack, and make merry with his distorted features, and strange and hideous cries;—go, laugh at the convulsive throes of the epi-

* Howe on "Charity in Reference to other Men's Sins."

leptic ;—go to the field of battle, and mock the groans of the wounded and dying ;—all this is more humane and merciful than delighting in sin. Could we look down upon the burning lake, and see there how the miserable ghosts are tossed upon the billows of the burning deep, and hear their dreadful exclamations,—"Who can dwell with devouring fire? Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?"—should we, then, divert ourselves with sin? Charity *does* thus look upon their misery, so far as her imagination goes, and feels a cold horror and a shivering dread. She mourns over sin wheresoever she sees it, and weeps for those who never weep for themselves. This is her declaration, as she looks around upon the sins of mankind—" Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."

Love cannot delight *in the misconduct of an enemy or a rival.* This, perhaps, is the precise meaning of the Apostle, in the expression we are now illustrating. Few of us are without some one or more who are considered by us, or who consider themselves, in the character of an opponent, or a competitor ; and in such cases there is great danger of our being pleased with their moral failures. It is not often that any, except those who are more than ordinarily depraved, will allow themselves to go so far as to *tempt* an enemy to sin, in order to gain the advantage over him. Yet there are some such, who will lay snares for his feet, and watch with eager hope for his halting : and when unable to accomplish this by their own personal exertions, will not scruple to engage accomplices in the work. Weaker and junior agents, who probably may know nothing, or know but little of the purpose for which they are employed, may be drawn by the master-spirit of mischief into the confederacy, and be made the instrument of tempting an immortal creature to sin against God, and ruin his own soul. This is the climax of revenge, the highest pitch of wickedness, and the greatest refinement of human malice. It is to extend the mischief of revenge to another world ; to call in the aid of devils, and the quenchless fire, to supply the defects of our ability to inflict misery

in proportion to our wishes; and to perpetuate our ill will through eternity. To tempt men to sin against God, with a view to serve ourselves by degrading them before the world, unites much of the malevolence of a devil, with as much of his ingenuity.

But if we cannot go to such a length as to tempt an opponent or rival to sin, yet, *if we feel a delight in seeing him fall by other means;* if we indulge a secret complacency in beholding him rendering himself vile, blasting his reputation, destroying his popularity, and ruining his cause; if we inwardly exclaim, "Ah! so would I have it—now he has done for himself—it is all over with him—this is just what I wished and wanted;"—we delight in iniquity. And, oh, how inexpressibly dreadful to be seen with a smiling countenance, or an aspect which, if it relax not into a smile, is sufficiently indicative of the joyful state of the heart, to run with eagerness to proclaim the intelligence of the victory we have gained by that act of another which endangers his salvation: how contrary all this to the charity which delights in happiness!

Perhaps we only go so far *as to be pleased that the object of our dislike has been himself injured in a way similar to that in which he has injured us.* Although we may not allow ourselves to inflict any direct injury in the way of revenge, nor to engage others to do it for us, yet if we see him ill treated by another person and rejoice; if we exclaim, "I do not pity him, he has deserved it all for his behaviour to me, I am glad he has been taught how to behave to his neighbour;"—this is contrary to the law of love—it is a complacency in sin. Nor is the case altered, if our joy be professedly felt on account of the *consequences* which the sin has brought upon him. We may sometimes attempt to deceive ourselves, by the supposition that we do not rejoice in the iniquity that is committed, but only because it has been succeeded by those fruits which the misconduct has merited. We interpret it into a proof that God has taken up the cause of injured innocence, and avenged us of our adversary.

There are many circumstances and situations which more particularly expose us to the violation of this law of charity. In the case of two different denominations in religion, or two congregations of the same party in a town, between whom a misunderstanding and schism have been permitted to grow up and to operate, there is imminent danger of this unchristian spirit. Alas, alas! that the bosoms of men should be liable to such sentiments! Oh! shame, deep and lasting shame, upon some professing Christians, "that such unhallowed emotions should ever be excited in their bosoms!" "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice—lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph." Let it not be known that the bad passions of the human heart build their nests, like obscure birds, round the altar of the Lord; or, like poisonous weeds, entwine their baleful tendrils round the pillars of his house. We do not mean to say, that any *good man* can rejoice in the open immorality and vice of an opponent; but are there not many, in all large communities, who, though of Israel in one sense, belong not to it in reality? And where the failure does not proceed to the length of a more awful delinquency, but consists merely of some minor breaches of the law of propriety, are not even the best of men sometimes exposed to the temptation of rejoicing over them, if their cause is promoted by them? The weaker party, especially, if they have been ill used, treated with pride and scorn, oppression and cruelty, are very apt to take delight in those instances of misconduct by which their opponents have brought upon themselves the prejudice of the public.

Rival candidates for fame, or power, or influence, whether in ecclesiastical or secular affairs, are liable to the sin of rejoicing in iniquity. Hard, indeed, is it for such hearts as ours to repress all feelings of secret complacency in those acts of a competitor by which he sinks, and we are raised, in public esteem. That man gives himself credit for more virtue than he really pos-

sesses, who imagines he should find it easy to weep over the follies and miscarriages of the rival who contends with him for what it is of much importance he should obtain, or of an enemy who has deeply injured him. Job mentions it as a convincing proof of his integrity, and a striking display of good conduct:—"If I rejoiced in the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him." And it was a fine manifestation of the generosity of David, that instead of rejoicing over those sins which, in the conduct of Saul, brought on the catastrophe that elevated *him* to the throne of Israel, he bewailed them with as sincere and pungent grief, as he could have done had Saul been the kindest of fathers. That we are in danger of the sin we are now considering, is also evident from the exhortation of Solomon—"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth." Charity, if it had full possession of our hearts, and entire sway, would not only repress all outward exhibitions of this delight, but all inward emotions; would make us dread lest an opponent should fall into sin; would not allow us to see him go unwarned to transgression, but compel us to admonish him of his danger; and would make us cheerfully forego the greatest advantage to our cause or reputation, that we might gain by his misconduct. This is the holiness of love, and the proof of a genuine hatred of sin; for if we mourn only over our own sins, or the sins of our friends, or of our party, there may be something selfish in our grief after all; but to mourn over iniquity, when, though it does harm to another, it may, in some sense, promote our cause, is, indeed, to hate sin for its own sake, and for the sake of him by whom it is condemned.

We go on now to show in what love *does* rejoice: "Charity rejoiceth in the truth."

By *the truth* we are not to understand veracity as opposed to falsehood. The Apostle is not speaking of this subject. The truth means the doctrine of the

Word of God. This is a very common way of describing the revealed will of God in the Scriptures. "Sanctify them by thy *truth*" said our Lord; "thy word is truth." The truth *itself* is the object of complacency to love. Truth is the most glorious thing in the universe, next to God and holiness. It has been the great object of mental pursuits since the creation of the world; millions of minds have travelled in quest of it; philosophers profess to be so enamoured even with the very term, that they have worshipped it as a mere abstraction, which, after all they could not understand. What contentions has it originated—to what systems has it given rise—what dogmatism has it been the occasion of! And yet, after all, apart from revelation, what is it but a name? This gives it reality and form;—this tells us where it is, what it is, and how it is to be obtained. Here we learn that the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, and all the doctrines it includes or implies, is THE TRUTH. The question is answered, proposed by Pilate to the illustrious prisoner at his bar, and the oracle of heaven has declared that the Scriptures are *the truths*. And the truth is the object of complacency to charity; the bright star, yea, the full-orbed sun, that enlightens its eye, and points out the resting-place of its heart. And it can rejoice in nothing else. Falsehood and error, and the devices of the human mind, are the objects of its disgust and abhorrence. It is evident, then, as we have already shown, that love differs essentially from that vague kind of charity which is so much cried up at present, both without and within the pale of the Church; which scorns to proceed upon the Scripture ground of the truth and its genuine influence; reviling as narrow-mindedness, and an uncharitable party spirit, all regard to particular doctrines;—but extends its indiscriminate embrace, and pays its idle and unmeaning compliments to all persons, of whatever denomination or persuasion, presuming that they are all *serious* and *mean well*, however much they differ from each other, or from the

Scripture, in sentiment or in practice. One of the maxims of this spurious candour, as we have already considered, is, that there is no moral turpitude in mental error; and that everything is non-essential which does not relate to the interests of morality. How widely this counterfeit liberality differs from the apostolic charity, is evident from the fact which we are now considering, and by which we are told that love *delights in the truth.* For the truth it will be zealous, as for an object dearer than life itself; to this it will be ready to set the seal of blood, and not resign or betray it through fear of the gloom of the captive's dungeon, or dread of the martyr's stake. This is its joy in life—its support in death: this is the dear companion of its pilgrimage on earth, and its eternal associate in the felicities of heaven.

But as the truth is here opposed to iniquity, the Apostle especially intended to state that *holiness* is the object of complacency to charity. Holiness is the rational and appropriate effect of the truth believed. No man can receive the truth in the love of it, without bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory of God. It is the delight of this pure and heavenly grace to contemplate holiness wherever it is to be found. Ascending to the celestial world, it joins the choirs of the cherubim, to look upon the spotless One, and with them to give utterance to its ecstacies, in the short but sublime anthem, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty." Undismayed by the roar of thunder, and the sound of the trumpet, and the voice of words; by the thick darkness, and the vivid lightnings, and the agitation of the quaking earth;—it ventures near the base of Sinai, and, for the delight that it has in holiness, rejoices in the law which is the rule of righteousness. The angels are pleasant to behold, because they are clad in garments of unsullied purity; and the crown of glory which Adam wore before his fall was his innocence; and the deep degradation into which he fell by his apostacy, was loss of holiness, in which consisted the image of God. The

ceremonial law has an excellence in the eye of charity, because it teaches the value of holiness in the view of God, and the necessity of it for man. The prophetic visions are all delighted in, because they are distinguished by the beauties of holiness; and the whole Gospel of Jesus is dear to the heart of love, because it is intended to purify unto Christ a Church, which he will present to the Father without spot, wrinkle, or blemish. Men are esteemed and loved on earth as they have this moral excellence enstamped upon their souls; and in looking for a heaven which shall satisfy all its desires, it can think of nothing higher and better than a state of sinless purity.

So ardent and so uniform is charity's regard to holiness, that it rejoices in it when it is found in an enemy or a rival. Yes; if we are under the influence of this divine virtue as we ought to be, we shall desire, and desire very fervently too, that those who have displeased or injured us were better than they are. We shall wish to see every speck of imperfection gone from their conduct, and their whole character standing out to the admiration of the world, and receiving the approbation of those by whom they are now condemned. We shall be willing to do any thing by which they may conciliate to themselves the favour of the alienated multitude, and also raise themselves to the vantage ground on which their misconduct has placed us above them. This *is* charity, to rejoice in those moral excellences, and gaze upon them with gratitude and complacency, which invest the character of one that opposes us with loveliness and beauty, and by which his cause is promoted, in some degree, to the detriment of ours. Men of little virtue may sometimes join from policy in those commendations of another's goodness, the justice of which they cannot dispute, and the harmony of which they dare not disturb; but it is only the Christian, who is far advanced in the practice of all that is difficult in religion, who can secretly rejoice, without envy or jealousy, in those very virtues which draw away the public attention

from himself, and cause him and his party to pass into eclipse and to sink into shadow. " O Charity ! this is *thy* work, and *this* thy glory ;—a work too rarely performed—a glory too rarely seen—in this region of selfishness, in this world of imperfection ; where, of the multitudes that profess to submit to thy sway, there are still so few who are really governed by thy laws, and inspired by thine influence.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CANDOUR OF LOVE.

"Charity beareth all things."

Some writers consider this verse as an amplification of the foregoing one, and explain it, in reference to the truth, in the following manner:—"It beareth all things" reported in the truth, however opposed to the corruption of human nature, and counts none of them hard sayings or unfit to be borne; "it believeth all things" imported in the great truth, or all the inferences which the Apostles have deduced from it, as being well affected to the source from whence they flow; "hopeth for all things" promised in it, and "endureth all things;" or patiently suffers all the afflictions that can attend a steady attachment to it. This gives a very good sense of the words, and admits the full force of the universal expressions. Yet it certainly agrees better with the scope of the Apostle, to understand the verse with reference to the brethren as the objects of it.

If we render the first expression, and which we are now about to consider, as our translators have done, it may signify our bearing one another's burdens and

weaknesses, which is to fulfil the law of Christ: and it must be confessed this is strictly true; for whoever is under the influence of this principle, will possess a spirit of tender sympathy. In this world we all groan, being burdened. Each has his own load of care, or grief, or imperfection. This is not the state where we find perfect rest. How wide is the scope, how frequent the opportunity, how numerous the occasions, for sympathy! And, who that is possessed of benevolence, can allow himself to pass a brother upon the road, labouring under a heavier load than his own, without offering to bear a part? We are not to be impertinently officious and intermeddling, nor to pry into the secrets of our neighbours with an inquisitive curiosity; but to inquire into the cause which gives them so much solicitude or so much grief, is the duty of those who are the witnesses of their careworn countenance and downcast look. What an unfeeling heart must that man have, who can see the very form of care and sorrow before him, and never kindly ask the reason of its existence? It is but little that sympathy can do for the sufferer, but that little should be most cheerfully afforded. To be unnoticed and unpitied in our griefs, adds greatly to their weight. For what purpose are Christians collected into churches? not merely to eat the Lord's Supper together: this could be done without any such distinct recognition of a mutual relationship, as that which takes place in the fellowship of believers. The end and design of this bond is, that being united as one body, the members might cherish a general sympathy for each other, and exercise their benevolence in the way of mutual assistance. The rich, by their munificence, should help their poorer brethren to bear the burden of poverty; the strong should aid the weak to bear the burden of their fears and apprehensions; those who are in health and ease should, by seasonable visits, and soothing words, and kind offices, bear the burdens of the sick; counsel should always be given, when it is sought by those who are in difficulty; and a disposition should pervade the

whole body, to render its varied resources, talents, and energies, available for the benefit of the whole.

But though this also gives a beautiful meaning, and enjoins a necessary duty, it is not the right view of the passage. The word translated "beareth" all things, signifies also, "to contain, to conceal, to cover." The idea of "bearing" is parallel in meaning with that of "enduring," of which the Apostle speaks in the latter part of the verse; and it is not probable that it was his intention to express the same thought twice. Adopting "concealment" as the sentiment intended to be expressed and the failings of others as the object to which it refers, I shall go on to show in what way it is practised.

To do this with still greater effect, we shall exhibit a general view of those sins to which the view of Christian charity stands exposed; and these are, *slander*, *detraction*, and *rash judging*, or *censoriousness*.

Perhaps there are no sins which are more frequently alluded to, or more severely rebuked, in Scripture, than those of the tongue; and for this reason,—because there are none to which we are so frequently tempted—none we are so prone to indulge, or so bold to excuse—none which are so fruitful of disorder and discomfort to society. Besides swearing, falsehood, obscenity, blasphemy,—the Scripture speaks of bearing false witness, railing, tale-bearing, whispering, backbiting, slander, and reproach:—a dismal enumeration of vices belonging to that member which was intended to be the glory of our frame. By SLANDER, we understand the circulation of a *false* report with the intention of injuring a neighbour's reputation. Its most vicious excess is the *invention* and construction of a story which is absolutely false from beginning to end. Its next lower grade, though little inferior in criminality, is to become the *propagator* of the tale, knowing it to be false. "This," says BARROW, "is to become the hucksters of counterfeit wares, or factors in this vile trade. There is no coiner who hath not emissaries and accomplices ready to take from his hand and put off his money; and such

slanderers at second hand are scarcely less guilty than the first authors. He that breweth lies may have more wit and skill, but the broacher showeth the like malice and wickedness. In this there is no great difference between the great devil that frameth scandalous reports, and the little imps that run about and disperse them." The next operation of slander is to *receive and spread, without examining* into the truth of them, false and injurious reports. It is a part of a good man's character, that "He taketh not up a reproach against his neighbour;" *i. e.* he does not easily entertain it, much less propagate it; he does not receive it but upon the most convincing evidence: but slander founds reproachful tales upon conjecture or suspicion, and raises an injurious representation upon a suppositious foundation. Sometimes it withers the reputation of a neighbour by rash speaking, or vehemently affirming things which it has no reason to believe, and no motive for affirming, but the hope of exciting ill will. Slander is *sinful*, because forbidden in every part of Scripture; *cruel*, because it is robbing our neighbour of that which is dearer to him than life; and *foolish*, because it subjects the calumniator himself to all kinds of inconvenience,—for it not only exposes him to the wrath of God, the loss of his soul, and the miseries of hell in the world to come, but it makes him odious in the present life, causes him to be shunned and discredited, arms his conscience against his own peace, brings upon himself the most reproachful accusations, and not unfrequently the vengeance of that public justice, which is rightly appointed to be the guardian not only of property and life, but of reputation also.

Detraction, or backbiting, differs a little from slander, though, in its general nature and constitution, it closely resembles it. Slander involveth an imputation of falsehood; but detraction may clothe itself with truth: it is sweetened poison, served from a golden cup by the hand of hypocrisy. A detractor's aim is the same as the slanderer's—to injure the reputation of another; but he avails himself of means that are a little

different. He represents persons and actions under the most disadvantageous circumstances he can,—setting forth those which may make them appear guilty or ridiculous, and throwing into the shade such as are commendable. "When he cannot deny the metal to be good and the stamp to be true, he clippeth it, and so rejecteth it from being current: he misconstrues doubtful actions unfavourably, and throws over the very virtues of his neighbours the name of faults,—calling the sober sour, the conscientious morose, the devout superstitious, the frugal sordid, the cheerful frivolous, and the reserved crafty: he diminishes from the excellence of good actions, by showing how much better they might have been done; and attempts to destroy all confidence in long-established character, and all respect for it, by pitching on some single act of imprudence, and expanding it into a magnitude, and darkening it into a shadow, which truth and justice forbid. Such is the backbiter; whose crime is compounded of the ingredients of ill humour, pride, selfishness, envy, malice, falsehood, cowardice, and folly. Backbiting must be peculiarly hateful to God: "He is the God of truth, and therefore detesteth lying, of which detraction ever hath a spice: He is the God of justice, and therefore doth especially abhor wronging the best persons and actions: He is the God of love, and therefore cannot but loath this capital violation of charity: He is jealous of his glory, and therefore cannot endure it to be abused by slurring his good gifts and graces: He cannot but hate the offence which approacheth to that most heinous and unpardonable sin, that consisteth in defaming the excellent works performed by divine power and goodness, ascribing them to bad causes."

The same writer, in speaking of the mischief of detraction, as discouraging others from the performance of that goodness which is thus vilified and defamed, has the following beautiful remarks. Many, seeing the best men thus disparaged, and the best actions vilified, are disheartened and deterred from practising virtue, especially in a conspicuous and eminent degree:—"Why,"

will many a man say, "shall I be strictly good, seeing goodness is so liable to be misused? Had I not better be contented with a mediocrity and obscurity of goodness, than by a glaring lustre thereof to draw the envious eye and kindle raging obloquy upon me?" And when the credit of virtue is blasted in its practices, many will be diverted from it. So will it grow out of request, and the world be corrupted by these agents of the Evil One. It were adviseable, upon this consideration, not to seem ever to detract, even not then when we are assured that, by *speaking* ill, we shall not really *do* it; if we should discover any man to seem worthy, or to be so reputed, whom yet we discern, by standing in a nearer light, not to be truly such, yet wisdom would commonly dictate, and goodness dispose, not to mar his repute. If we should observe, without danger of mistake, any plausible action to be performed out of bad inclinations, principles, or designs, yet ordinarily in discretion and honesty, we should let it pass with such commendation as its appearance may procure, rather than slur it by venting our disadvantageous apprehensions about it; for it is no great harm that any man should enjoy undeserved commendation; our granting its claims is but being over just, which, if it ever be a fault, can hardly be so in this case, wherein we do not expend any cost or suffer any damage; but it may do mischief to blemish any appearance of virtue: it may be a wrong thereto, to deface its very image; the very disclosing of hypocrisy doth inflict a wound on goodness, and exposeth it to scandal, for bad men will then be prone to infer that all virtue doth proceed from the like bad principles; so the disgrace cast on that which is spurious, will redound to the prejudice of that which is most genuine. And if it be good to forbear detracting from that which is certainly false, much more so in regard to that which is possibly true; and far more still is it so in respect to that which is clear and sure.

Censoriousness is another sin of the same class—another child of the same family: varying, however, from those we have already considered by acting not so

much in the way of *reporting* faults as in condemning them. It is different from slander, inasmuch as it assumes, that what it condemns is true; and from detraction, inasmuch as it is not exercised with an intention to injure another in public estimation, but only to reprove him for what is wrong. It assumes the character, not of a witness, but of a judge: hence the injunction, "Judge not." Censoriousness, then, means a disposition to scrutinize men's motives—to pass sentence upon their conduct—to reproach their faults,—accompanied by an unwillingness to make all reasonable allowances for their mistakes, and a tendency to the side of severity rather than to that of leniency. We are not to suppose that all inspection and condemnation of the conduct of others is sin; nor that all reproof of offenders is a violation of the law of charity; nor that we are to think well of our neighbours, in opposition to the plainest evidence; nor that we are to entertain such a credulous opinion of the excellence of mankind, as unsuspectingly to confide in every man's pretences: but what we condemn is needlessly inquiring into the conduct and motives of other men; examining and arraigning them at our bar, when we stand in no relation to them that requires such a scrutiny; delivering our opinion when it is not called for; pronouncing sentence with undue severity, and heaping the heaviest degree of reproach upon an offender which we can find language to express.

"The world is become so extremely critical and censorious, that in many places the chief employment of men, and the main body of conversation, is, if we mark it, taken up in judging; every company is a court of justice, every seat becometh a tribunal, at every table standeth a bar, whereunto all men are cited—whereat every man, as it happeneth, is arraigned and sentenced; no sublimity or sacredness of dignity—no integrity or innocence of life—no prudence or circumspection of demeanour,—can exempt any person from it. Not one escapes being taxed under some odious name or scandalous character or other. Not only the

outward actions and visible practices of men are judged, but their retired sentiments are brought under review—their inward dispositions have a verdict passed upon them—their final states are determined. Whole bodies of men are thus judged at once; and nothing is it in one breath to damn whole churches—at one push, to throw down whole nations into the bottomless pit: yea, God himself is hardly spared, his providence coming under the bold obloquy of those, who,—as the Psalmist speaketh of some in his time, whose race does yet survive,—speak loftily, and set their mouth against the heavens." Barrow, in order to censure this temper, gives the following qualifications of a judge. *He should be appointed by competent authority, and not intrude himself into office.* To how many censors may we say, "Who made thee a judge?" *He should be free from all prejudice and partiality.* Is this the case with the censorious? *He should never proceed to judgment, without a careful examination of the case, so as well to understand it.* Let the private self-appointed judges remember this, and act upon the principle of Solomon—"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and a shame to him." *He should never pronounce sentence but upon good grounds, after certain proof and full conviction.* If this rule were observed, how many censures would be prevented. *He will not meddle with causes beyond the jurisdiction of his court.* If this were recollected and acted upon, the voice of unlawful censure would die away in silence; for who are we, that we should try the hearts and search the reins of men, or judge another's servant? *He never proceeds against any man, without citing him to appear, either in person or by his representative, and giving him an opportunity to defend himself.* When any one is censured in company, there should always be found some generous mind, who would propose that the accused should be sent for, and the trial put off till he appeared. *He must pronounce, not according to private fancy, but to public and established laws.* Is this the rule of the censorious? Is it not rather their custom to make their own private opinion

the law? *He should be a person of great knowledge and ability.* What is the usual character of the private censors of human conduct? are they not persons of great ignorance and few ideas, who, for want of something else to say, or ability to say it, talk of their neighbours' faults,—a topic on which a child or a fool can be fluent? *He is not an accuser; and moreover is, by virtue of his office, counsel for the accused.* On the contrary, the censorious are, generally, not only judges but accusers, and counsel *against* the culprits whom they have brought to their bar. *He should lean, as far as the public good will allow to the side of mercy:* but mercy has no place in the bosom of the censorious, and their very justice is cruelty and oppression. *He must himself be innocent.* Why is there not a voice heard in every company, when the prisoner is arraigned, and the process of judgment begins, saying "He that is without sin, let him cast the first stone?" *He proceeds with solemnity and grief, and slowness, to pass the sentence.* But what indecent haste and levity, not excepting joy, do we witness in those who are given to the practice of censuring their neighbours' conduct.*

Now, to all these sinful practices Christian love stands directly opposed. *It is a long time before it allows itself to perceive the faults of others.* Not more quick is instinct in the bird, or beast, or fish, of prey, to discover its victim, than the detractor and the censorious are to descry imperfections as soon as they appear in the conduct of those around them. Their vision is quite telescopic, to see objects of this kind at a distance, and they have a miscroscopic power of inspection, to examine those that are small and near: and, when looking at faults, they always employ the highest magnifying power which their instrument admits of; while for the purpose of looking at those spots, which to the naked eye would be lost amidst the surrounding glory, they carry a darkened glass. They do not want to see virtues: no; all that is fair, and good, and lovely, is passed over in quest

* Dr. Barrow's Sermons.

of deformity and evil. But all this is utterly abhorrent to the nature of love; which, intent upon the well-being of mankind, and anxious for their happiness, is ever looking out for the signs and the symptoms which betoken that the sum of human felicity is perpetually increasing. The eye of the Christian philanthropist is so busily employed in searching for excellence, and so fixed and so ravished by it when it is found, that it is sure to pass over many things of a contrary nature, as not included in the object of its inquiry: just as he who is searching for gems is likely to pass by many common stones unheeded; or as he who is looking for a particular star or constellation in the heavens, is not likely to see the tapers which are near him upon earth. Good men are his delight; and to come at these, very many of the evil generation are passed by: and there is also a singular power of abstraction in his benevolence, to separate, when looking at a mixed character, the good from the evil, and, losing sight of the latter, to concentrate its observation in the former.

And when love is obliged to admit the existence of imperfections, *it diminishes as much as possible their magnitude*, and hides them as much as is lawful from its own notice. It takes no delight in looking at them, finds no pleasure in keeping them before its attention, and poring into them; but turns away from them, as an unpleasant object, as a delicate sense would from whatever is offensive. If we find an affinity between our thoughts and the sins of which we are the spectators, it is a plain proof that our benevolence is of a very doubtful nature, or in a feeble state; on the contrary, if we involuntarily turn away our eyes from beholding evil, and are conscious to ourselves of a strong revulsion, and an acute distress, when we cannot altogether retire from the view of it, we possess an evidence that we know much of that virtue which covereth all things. If we are properly, as we ought to be, under the influence of love, we shall make all reasonable allowances for those things which are wrong in the conduct of our neighbour; we shall, as we have already considered,

not be forward to suspect evil; but shall do everything to lessen the heinousness of the action. This is what is meant, when it is said that "Charity covers a multitude of sins. Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covereth all sins."

It is the wish and the act of love, *to conceal from the public all the faults*, which the good of the offender, and the ends of public justice, do not require to be disclosed. There are cases, in which to conceal offences, whatever kindness it may be to one, would be unkindness to many. If a person living in sin, has so far imposed upon a minister, as to induce him to propose him for admission to the fellowship of the church, it is the bounden duty of any individual, who knows the real character of the candidate, to make it known to the pastor; and the same disclosure should be made in reference to a person already in communion, who is actually living in sin: concealment in these cases is an injury to the whole body of Christians. If a person is likely to be injured in his temporal concerns, by reposing confidence in one who is utterly unworthy of it, it is the duty of those who are acquainted with the snare to warn the destined victim of his danger. If any are so far regardless of the peace of society and the laws of the country, as to be engaged in great crimes against both, concealment on the part of those who are aware of the existence of such practices, is a participation in the crime. As our love is to be universal, as well as particular, it must never be exercised towards individuals in a way that is really opposed to the interests of the community.

But where no other interest is concerned—where no claims demand a disclosure—where no injury is done by concealment, and no benefit is conferred by giving publicity to a fault,—there our duty is to cover it over with the veil of secrecy, and maintain an unbroken silence upon the subject.

Instead of this friendly and amiable reserve, how different is the way in which many act! No sooner have they heard of the commission of a fault, than they

set off with the intelligence, as glad as if they bore the tidings of a victory, proclaiming the melancholy fact with strange delight in every company, and almost to every individual they meet; and as there is a greedy appetite in some persons for scandal, they find many ears as open to listen to the tale, as their lips are to tell it: or, perhaps, they relate the matter as a secret, extorting a promise from those to whom they communicate it that they will never mention it again. But if it be not proper to publish it to the world, why do they speak of it at all? If it be proper for publicity, why lock up others in silence? Sometimes the telling faults in secret is a pitiable kind of weakness, an utter impossibility of keeping anything in the mind, accompanied by an intention of publishing it only to a single person; but not unfrequently it is a wish to have the gratification of being the first to communicate the report to a large number of persons: each is made to promise that he will not disclose it, that the original reporter may not be anticipated as he pursues his round, and thus have his delight diminished, in being everywhere the first to tell the bad news.

Then there are some, *who publish the faults of others under the hypocritical pretence of lamenting over them, and producing in others a caution against the same thing.* You will see them in company putting on a grave countenance, and hear them asking the person who sits near them, but with a voice loud enough to reach every corner of the room, whether he has heard the report of Mr. Such-an-one's conduct; and when every ear is caught, every tongue silent, and every eye fixed, he will proceed, in a strain of deep lamentation and tender commiseration, to bewail the misconduct of the delinquent,—seasoning the narration of the offence, as he goes through all its circumstances and all its aggravations, with many expressions of pity for the offender, and many words of caution to the company. Thus, under the hypocritical guise of pity and the abhorrence of sin, has he indulged in this mischievous yet too common propensity, to publish the failings of some erring

brother. Has he mentioned the subject to the individual himself? If not, and he has withheld this mode of expressing his pity, what avails his public commiseration? What possible sympathy with the offender can it be, to placard him in public, and blazon his faults in company?

Some there are, who suppose *that there is little harm in talking, in their own particular circles, of the failings of their neighbours :* they would not speak of these things before strangers, or society in general; but they feel no scruple in making them matter of conversation among their select friends. But these friends may not all be prudent; and if it be not desirable that the fact should not be known without the circle, the best way is, that it be not known within it. Where there is no benefit likely to be obtained by publicity, it is best, in reference to character, to lock up the secret in our own mind, and literally to observe the injunction of the prophet— "Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide; keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom."

Love, not only will not *originate*, but will not help to *circulate*, an evil report. When the tale comes to her, there, at least in that direction, it stops. There are gossips, who, though they would shudder at slander, and, perhaps, would not be the first to give publicity to an idle report of another, yet would feel no scruple in telling what many already know. "It is no secret," they say, "else I would not mention it." But we should not do even this: we should neither invent, nor originate, nor propagate, an evil report. While every tongue is voluble in spreading bad tidings, charity will be silent: while all seem anxious to enjoy communion in backbiting and detraction, and to sip the cup of detraction as it passes round the company, she says to the person who has told the story, "I have no ears for defamation, or even for the tale of another's faults. Go, and affectionately speak with the individual of his failings, but do not talk of them in public." If all men acted on these principles, slander would die upon the

lips which gave it birth; tale-bearers would cease, for want of customers, to carry on their trade as pedlars in detraction; backbiting would go out of fashion; and the love of scandal be starved for want of food.

The evils, then, to which love is opposed, are—*Calumny*, which invents a slanderous report to injure the reputation of another; *detraction*, which magnifies a fault; *censoriousness*, which is too officious and too rigid in condemning it; *tale-bearing*, which propagates it; *curiosity*, which desires to know it; *malignity*, which takes delight in it. Of this list of vices, calumny is, of course, the worst; but a tattling disposition, though it may have little of the malignity of slander, is a servant to do its work, and a tool to perpetrate its mischief. Persons of this description are far too numerous. They are to be found in every town, in every village—yes, and in every church. They are not the authors of libels, but they are the publishers; they do not draw up the placard, but only paste it up in all parts of the town; and are amenable, not for the malice which invented the defamatory lie, but for the mischief of circulating it. Their minds are a kind of common sewer, into which all the filthy streams of scandal are perpetually flowing: a receptacle for whatever is offensive and noxious. Such gossips might be pitied for their weakness, if they were not still more to be dreaded for the injury they do. They are not malignants, but they are mischief-makers; and, as such, should be shunned and dreaded. Every door should be closed against them, or, at least, every ear. They should be made to feel that, if silence be a penance to them, their idle and injurious tales are a much more afflictive penance to their neighbours. Now, such persons would not only be rendered more safe, but more dignified, by charity: this heavenly virtue, by destroying their propensity to gossiping, would rescue them from reproach, and confer upon them an elevation of character to which they were strangers before. It would turn their activity into a new channel, and make them as anxious to promote the peace of society, as they were before to disturb it by the din of

their idle and voluble tongue. They would perceive that no man's happiness can be promoted by the publication of his faults: for if he be penitent, to have his failings made the butt of ridicule, is like pouring nitre and vinegar upon the deep wounds of a troubled mind; or if he be not, this exposure will do harm, by producing irritation, and by thus placing him farther off from true contrition.

If it be essential to charity, to feel a disposition to cover the faults which we witness, and to treat with tenderness and delicacy the offender, it is quite distressing to consider how little of it there is in the world. How much need have we to labour for an increase of it ourselves, and to diffuse it, both by our influence and example, that the harmony of society may not be so frequently interrupted by the lies of the slanderer, the exaggerations of the detractor, the harsh judgments of the censorious, or the idle gossip of the tale-bearer.

"Charity believeth all things."

Nearly allied to the property we have just considered, and an essential part of candour, is that which follows; —"Charity believeth all things;"—*i. e.* not all things contained in the word of God,—for faith in divine testimony is not here the subject treated of,—but all things which are testified concerning our brethren; not, however, such as are testified to their disadvantage, but in their favour. This property or operation of love is so involved, and has been to such an extent illustrated, in what we have already considered, that it cannot be necessary to enlarge upon the subject. As charity regards with benevolent desire the well-being of all, it must feel naturally disposed to believe whatever can be stated in their favour. Tell a fond mother of the faults of her child: does she immediately and entirely believe the testimony? No. You will perceive an aspect of un-

belief on her countenance; you will hear inquiries and doubtful insinuations from her lips: and after the clearest evidence has been adduced in support of the testimony, you will still discern that she believes you not. But, on the contrary, carry to her a report of her child's *good* conduct—tell her of his achievements in wisdom or in virtue,—and you see at once the look of assent, the smile of approbation, hear the language of conviction, and, in some cases, witness a degree of confidence which amounts to weakness. How can we account for this? On the principle of the Apostle, that "love believeth all things:" the mother loves her child; she is sincerely anxious for his well-being; and as our wishes have an influence upon our convictions, she is forward to believe what is said to her child's honour, and as backward to believe what is said to his discredit.

Here, then, is one of the brightest displays of charity, as exhibited in the man who believeth all things which are related to the advantage of others. He hears the report with unfeigned pleasure, listens with the smile of approbation, the nod of assent; he does not turn to the subject of human depravity, to find ground and reason for discrediting the fact, nor does he search with inquisitive eye for some flaw in the evidence to impeach the veracity of the testimony; he does not cautiously hold his judgment in abeyance, as if afraid of believing too well of his neighbour; but, if the evidence amount to probability, he is ready to believe the account, and delights to find another and another instance of human excellence, by which he may be more reconciled and attached to the family of man, and by which he discovers that there is more goodness and happiness on earth than he knew of before.

The strongest proof and power of love, in this mode of its operation, is its disposition to believe all good reports of an *enemy* or a *rival*. Many persons can believe nothing good, but everything bad, of those whom they consider in this light. Let them have once conceived a prejudice or a dislike; let them only have been injured or offended, opposed or humbled, by any one;

—and from that moment their ears are closed against every word to his credit, and open to every tale that may tend to his disgrace. Prejudice has neither eyes nor ears for good; but is all eye and ear for evil. Its influence on the judgment is prodigious; its bewildering operation upon our convictions is really most surprizing and frightful. In many cases, it gives up evidence as bright, clear, and steady, as the meridian splendour of the sun, to follow that which is as dim and delusive as the feeble light of an ignis fatuus. How tremblingly anxious should we be to keep the mind free from this misleading influence! How careful to obtain that candid, impartial, discriminating judgment, which can distinguish things that differ, and approve of things that are excellent, even in reference to persons that are in some respects opposed to us! This is candour; and a more important disposition of the kind we can scarcely imagine. Through that great law of our nature, which we call the association of ideas, we are too apt, when we have discovered one thing wrong in the character or conduct of another, to unite with it nothing but wrong, and that continually: we scarcely ever think of him, or repeat his name, but under the malign influence of this unhappy association. What we need is more of that power of abstraction of which we have already spoken, by which we can separate the occasional act from permanent character—the bad qualities from the good ones,—and still be left at liberty to believe what is good, notwithstanding what we know of the bad.

If, in accordance with the principles of revelation, the testimony of our senses, and the evidence of experience, we believe that there is none so perfect in the view of God as to be destitute of all flaws; we at the same time believe that, so far as mere general excellence goes, there are few so bad as to be destitute of all approvable traits. It is the business of candour, to examine, to report, to believe with impartiality, and candour is one of the operations of love. This heavenly disposition forbids the prejudice which is generated by differences on the subject of religion, and ena-

bles its possessor to discredit the evil, and to believe the favourable testimony which is borne to those of other denominations and of other congregations. All excellence belongs not to our society or sect; all evil is not to be found in other societies or sects: yet how prepared are many persons to believe nothing good, or everything bad, of other sects or other societies. Away, away, with this detestable spirit! cast it out of the church of the living God! like the legion spirit which possessed the man who dwelt among the tombs, and made him a torment to himself, and a terror to others, this demon of prejudice has too long possessed, and torn, and infuriated, even the body of the Church. "Spirit of love! descend, and expel the infernal usurper. Cast out this spoiler of our beauty, this disturber of our peace, this opponent of our communion, this destroyer of our honour. Before thy powerful yet gentle sway, let prejudice retire, and prepare us to believe all things that are reported to us to the credit of others—be they of our party or not—whether they have offended us or not—and whether in past times they have done evil or good."

"Charity hopeth all things."

Hope has the same reference here, as the faith just considered; it relates not to what God has promised in his word to them that love him, but to the good which is reported to exist in our neighbours. In a report of a doubtful matter, where the evidence is apparently against an individual, love will still hope that something may yet turn up to his advantage—that some light will yet be thrown on the darker features of the case, which will set the matter in a more favourable point of view; it will not give full credit to present appearances, however indicative they may seem to be of evil, but hope, even against hope, for the best.

If the *action* itself cannot be defended, then love will hope that the *motive* was not bad; that the intention in the mind of the actor was not so evil as the deed appeared to the eye of the spectator; that ignorance, not malice, was the cause of the transaction; and that the time will come when this will be apparent.

Love does not *speedily abandon an offender in despondency*—does not immediately give him up as incorrigible, nor soon cease to employ the means necessary for his reformation; but is willing to expect that he may yet repent and improve, however discouraging present appearances may be. Hope is the main spring of exertion; and as love means a desire for the well-being of others, it will not soon let go that hope, in the absence of which all its efforts must be paralyzed.

There are reasons which make it wise, as well as kind, to believe and hope all things for the best. *Presumptive evidence, however strong, is often fallacious.* Many circumstances in the case may look very suspicious; and yet the after-discovery of some little event may alter the aspect of the whole affair, and make the innocence of the accused far more apparent than even his guilt seemed before. The various instances in which we have ourselves been deceived by appearances, and have been led by defective, though at the time convincing, evidence, should certainly teach us caution in listening to evil reports, and dispose us to believe and hope all things.

When we consider, also, *how common is slander, detraction, and talebearing*, we should not be hasty in forming an opinion; nor should we forget the anxiety which is often manifested by each party engaged in a contention to gain our alliance to their cause, *by being first to report the matter, and to produce an impression favourable to themselves.* Solomon has given us a proverb, the truth of which we have seen proved in a thousand instances, and which, notwithstanding, we are continually forgetting,—"He that is first in his own cause, seemeth to be just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him out." It is a proof of great weakness, so to give our

ear to the first reporter, as to close it against the other party: and yet we are all prone to do this. A plausible tale produces an impression, which no subsequent opposing testimony, though attended with far clearer evidence of truth than the first statement, can effectually obliterate. We know that every case has two aspects—we have all been experimentally acquainted with the folly of deciding till we have heard both sides; and yet, in opposition to our reason and to our experience, we are apt to take up a prejudice upon ex-parte statements. Another circumstance, by which we are in danger of being misled in our opinion of our neighbour's conduct, is the mischievous propensity of many persons, to *exaggerate* everything they relate. Whatever be the philosophical cause, into which a fondness for the marvellous, and a delight in exciting surprise, may be resolved, its existence, and its prevalence, are unquestionable. Perhaps, we *all* like to relate what is new, and strange, and interesting; not excepting even bad news. To such a pitch is this carried, by those who are deeply infected with the propensity, that they never tell anything as they heard it: every fact is embellished or magnified. If a neighbour has displayed a little warmth of temper, they saw him raging like a fury: if he was a little cheerful after dinner, he was tippling; if he was evasive, they protest that he committed palpable falsehood, if not perjury; if he had not been so generous in his transactions as could be wished, he was an extortioner, and devoid of common honesty. Nothing is moderate and sober in the hands of such persons; everything is extravagant, or extraordinary. All they meet with, is in the form of adventure. Out of the least incident they can construct a tale; and on a small basis of truth, raise a mighty superstructure of fiction, to interest and impress every company into which they come. Undeterred by the presence of the individual from whom they received the original fact, they will not scruple to go on magnifying and embellishing, till the author of the statement can scarcely recognize his own narrative. How strange it seems, that

such people should either not know, or not remember, that all this while they are telling falsehoods. They do not seem to understand, that if we relate a circumstance in such a manner as is calculated to give an impression which, either in nature or degree, does not accord with reality, we are guilty of the sin of lying. Where character is concerned, the sin is still greater, since it adds detraction to falsehood. Many a man's reputation has been frittered away by this wicked and mischievous propensity. Every narrator of an instance of misconduct, not, perhaps, heinous in the first instance, has added something to the original fact, till the offence has stood before the public eye, so blackened by this accumulative defamation, that, for a while, he has lost his character, and only partially recovered it in the end, and with extreme difficulty. Remembering the existence of such an evil, we should be backward to take up an unfavourable opinion upon first appearance; and where we cannot believe all things, be willing to hope: such is the dictate of charity, and such the conduct of those who yield their hearts to its influence.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SELF-DENIAL OF LOVE.

"Love endureth all things."

Charity is not fickle, unsteady, and easily discouraged; not soon disheartened, or induced to relinquish its object; but is persevering, patient, and self-denying, in the pursuance of its design to relieve the wants, assuage the sorrows, reform the vices, and allay the animosities, of those whose good it seeks. It is as patient in bearing, as it is active in doing; uniting the uncomplaining submission of the lamb, the plodding perseverance of the ox, with the courage of the lion.

It is no frivolous and volatile affection, relinquishing its object from a mere love of change; nor is it a feeble virtue, which weakly lets go its purpose in the prospect of difficulty; nor a cowardly grace, which drops its scheme, and flees from the face of danger; no, it is the union of benevolence with strength, patience, courage, and perseverance. It has feminine beauty, and gentleness, and sweetness, united with masculine energy, and power, and heroism. To do good, it will meekly bear with the infirmities of the meanest, or will brave the scorn and fury of the mightiest. But let us survey the opposition, the difficulties, the discouragements, the provocations, which it has to bear, and which, with enduring patience, it can resist.

Sacrifices of ease, of time, of feeling, and of property, must all be endured: for it is impossible to exercise Christian charity without making these. He that would do good to others, without practising self-denial, does but dream. The way of philanthropy is ever up hill, and not unfrequently over rugged rocks, and through thorny paths. If we would promote the happiness of our fellow-creatures, it must be by parting with something or other that is dear to us. If we would lay aside revenge when they have injured us, and exercise forgiveness, we must often mortify our own feelings. If we would reconcile the differences of those who are at variance, we must give up our time, and sometimes our comfort. If we would assuage their griefs, we must expend our property. If we would reform their wickedness, we must part with our ease. If we would, in short, do good of any kind, we must be willing to deny ourselves, and bear labour of body and pain of mind. And love is willing to do this; it braces itself for labour, arms itself for conflict, prepares itself for suffering: it looks difficulties in the face, counts the cost, and heroically exclaims, "None of these things move me, so that I may diminish the evils, and promote the happiness, of others." It will rise before the break of day, linger on the field of labour till midnight, toil amidst the sultry heat of summer, brave the northern blasts of winter, submit to derision, give the energies of body and the comfort of mind: all to do good.

Misconstruction is another thing that love endures. Some men's minds are ignorant, and cannot understand its schemes; others are contracted, and cannot comprehend them; others are selfish, and cannot approve them; others are envious, and cannot applaud them; and all these will unite, either to suspect or to condemn: but this virtue, "like the eagle, pursues its noble, lofty, heaven-bound course, regardless of the flock, of little pecking cavilling birds, which, unable to follow, amuse themselves by twittering their objections and ill will in the hedges below." Or, to borrow a scriptural allusion, love, like its great pattern, when he

was upon the earth, goes about doing good, notwithstanding the malignant perversion of its motives and actions on the part of its enemies. "I must do good," she exclaims: "if you cannot understand my plans, I pity your ignorance; if you misconstrue my motives, I forgive your malignity; but the clouds that are exhaled from the earth, may as well attempt to arrest the career of the sun, as for your dulness or malevolence to stop my attempts to do good. I must go on, without your approbation, and against your opposition."

Envy often tries the patience of love, and is another of the ills which it bears, without being turned aside by it. There are men who would enjoy the praise of benevolence without enduring its labours; that is, they would wear the laurel of victory without exposing themselves to the peril of war: they are sure to envy the braver, nobler spirits, whose generous conquests, having been preceded by labour, are followed by praise. To be good, and to do good, are alike the objects of envy with many persons. "A man of great merit," said a French author, "is a kind of public enemy. By engrossing a multitude of applauses, which would serve to gratify a great many others, he cannot but be envied: men naturally hate what they highly esteem, yet cannot love." The feeling of the countryman at Athens, who, upon being asked why he gave his vote for the banishment of Aristides, replied, "Because he is every where called the just," is by no means uncommon. The Ephesians expelled the best of their citizens, with the public announcement of this reason, "If any are determined to excel their neighbours, let them find another place to do it." Envy is that which love hates and proscribes, and, in revenge, envy hates and persecutes love in return; but the terror of envy does not intimidate love, nor its malignity disgust it: it can bear even the perversions, misrepresentations, and opposition, of this fiend-like passion, and pursues its course, simply saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

Ingratitude is often the hard usage which love has to sustain, and which it patiently endures. Into such a

state of turpitude is man fallen, that he would bear any weight rather than that of obligation. Men will acknowledge *small* obligations, but often return malice for such as are extraordinary; and some will sooner forgive great injuries than great services. Many persons do not know their benefactors, many more will not acknowledge them, and others will not reward them, even with the cheap offering of thanks. These things are enough to make us sick of the world: yes; but ought not to make us weary of trying to mend it; for the more ungrateful it is, the more it needs our benevolence. Here is the noble, the lofty, the godlike temper of charity: it pursues its course like the providence of Jehovah, which continues to cause its sun to rise and its rain to descend, not only upon the irrational creatures, who have no capacity to know their benefactor, but upon the rational ones, many of whom have no disposition to acknowledge him.

Derision is often employed to oppose the efforts of love by all the artillery of scorn. Spiritual religion, and especially that view of it which this subject exhibits, has ever been an object of contempt to ungodly men. Banter and ridicule are brought to stop its progress; the greatest profaneness and buffoonery are sometimes employed to laugh it out of countenance;—but it has learned to treat with indifference even the cruel mockings of irony, and to receive upon its shield-arm all the arrows of the most envenomed wit.

Opposition does not disgust, nor *persevering obstinacy* weary, it. It can endure to have its schemes examined and sifted by those who cannot understand them, cavilled at by those who cannot mend them, and resisted by those who have nothing to offer in their place. It does not throw all up in a fit of passion, nor suffer the tongue of petulance, nor the clamour of envy, to stop its efforts.

Want of success, that most discouraging consideration to activity, is not sufficient to drive it from the field; but in the expectation of the future harvest, it continues to plough and to sow in hope. Its object is too im-

portant to be relinquished for a few failures ; and nothing but the demonstration of absolute impossibility can induce it to give up its benevolent purpose.

If instances of this view of Christian love be necessary to illustrate and enforce it by the power of example, many and striking ones are at hand. Few, very few, are worthy of being put in competition with that of Mr. Clarkson, whose illustrious name, and that of his no less illustrious coadjutor, Mr. Wilberforce, will ever be pronounced with tears of gratitude by Africa, as the chief agents in the work of inducing the greatest commercial nation upon earth to abolish the infernal traffic in human beings ; and ought to be recorded in letters of gold by their grateful countrymen, for having delivered the nation from the greatest crime which, in her modern history, she ever committed, and from the greatest curse which she could dread at the hands of retributive justice. Perhaps no uninspired book may be so fairly regarded as a beautiful comment on the expression, " Charity endureth all things," as Clarkson's " History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade." Twenty years of that good man's life were occupied in long and fatiguing journies, at all seasons of the year : in labours of an almost incredible extent, to trace reports to their source, to collect information, and to gather evidence ; in braving opposition, bearing all kinds of ridicule, encountering savages, whose trade had made them reckless of crime, and thirsty for blood ; in personal exposure, so great, that by nothing less than supernatural strength, granted for the occasion, would he have been rescued at one time from threatened and intended death. Nor was this the full measure of the endurance : disappointment the most bitter and discouraging often extinguished his brightest hopes ; lukewarmness on the part of those from whom he had a right to expect the most zealous co-operation often saddened his heart, though it never paralyzed his zeal ; and, to try his perseverance and put his benevolence to the severest test, his cause was of a nature which, by the sufferings it brought under review, was enough to sicken

and turn from its purpose a compassion of less hardihood than his. What must that man have had to endure, who thus describes his feelings after the details of evidence furnished by only one of the thousands of days spent in familiarizing himself with the various scenes of the biggest outrage ever committed against the rights of humanity?—"The different scenes of barbarity which these represented to me, greatly added to the affliction of my mind. My feelings became now almost insupportable. I was agonized to think that this trade should last another day: I was in a state of agitation from morning till night: I determined I would soon leave the place in which I saw nothing but misery. I had collected now, I believe, all the evidence it would afford; and to stay a day longer in it than was necessary, would be only an interruption to my happiness and health."

Who but a Christian philanthropist of the highest order could have pursued such a career, year after year, and not be so wearied by labour—so disheartened by opposition—so disgusted by cruelty,—as to abandon the object of his pursuit? Here was, indeed, a beautiful illustration of the "*love that endureth all things.*"

But a greater than Clarkson might be mentioned. Let the history of *St. Paul* be studied, and his suffering career be traced, and his declarations heard concerning his varied and heavy tribulations. "I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death; for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ: we are weak, but ye are strong: ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour, we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless: being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons

more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods; once was I stoned; thrice I suffered shipwreck; a night and a day I have been in the deep: in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches." Nor did these sufferings come upon him without his being previously apprized of them, for the Holy Ghost had witnessed to him that bonds and afflictions awaited him. Yet neither the prospect of his varied tribulations, nor the full weight of them, made him for a moment think of relinquishing his benevolent exertions for the welfare of mankind. His was the love that "*endureth all things.*"

And a greater, far greater than even the great Apostle of the Gentiles, might be also introduced, as affording, by his conduct, a most striking illustration of this property of Christian charity. Who but himself can conceive of what the Son of God endured while he sojourned in this world? Who can imagine the magnitude of his sufferings, and the extent of that opposition, ingratitude, and hard usage, amidst which those sufferings were sustained, and by which they were so greatly increased? Never was so much mercy treated with so much cruelty; the constant labour he sustained, and the many privations to which he submitted, were little, compared with the malignant contradiction, resistance, and persecution, he received from those who were the objects of his mercy. The work of man's redemption was not accomplished, as was the work of creation, by a mere fiat delivered from the throne, on which Omnipotence reigned in the calm repose of infinite majesty: no—the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, as a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief. The

wrath of God, the fury of devils, the rage of man, the malignity of enemies, the wayward follies and fickleness of friends, the baseness of treachery, the scorn of official rank, and the many stings of ingratitude, calumny, and inconstancy,—all poured their venom into that heart which glowed with affection to the children of men. Nothing turned him from his purpose—nothing abated his ardour in the work of our salvation. His, too, and above all others, was indeed a love which "*endureth all things.*"

Such is the model we are to copy. In doing good we must prepare ourselves for opposition, and all its attendant train of evils. Whether our object be the conversion of souls, or the well-being of man's corporeal nature—whether we are seeking to build up the temporal, or to establish the eternal, interests of mankind,—we must remember that we have undertaken a task which will call for patient, self-denying, and persevering effort. In the midst of difficulties, we must not utter the vain and cowardly wish, that we had not set our hand to the plough; but press onward in humble dependance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, and animated by the hope of either being rewarded by success, or by the consciousness that we did every thing to obtain it: and we shall do this, if we possess much of the power of love; for its ardour is such, that many waters cannot quench it. Its energies increase with the difficulty that requires them, and, like a well-constructed arch, it becomes more firm and consolidated by the weight it has to sustain. In short, it is "stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as it knows that its labour shall not be in vain in the Lord."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PERMANENCE OF LOVE.

"Charity never faileth."

Permanence is the climax of excellence. How often has the sigh been heaved, and the tear been shed, over the perishable nature of earthly possessions. Their transient duration presented a painful contrast to their great worth, and extorted the sorrowful exclamation, Alas! that such excellence should be mortal! The charm of beauty soon fades, the force of genius is at length exhausted, the monuments of art decay; an incurable taint of corruption has infected every thing earthly, and even religion itself does not confer immortality upon every thing that belongs to its sacred economy. One thing there is, which shall remain for ever, for "charity never faileth;" and its permanence is the crown and glory of all its other noble qualities. It is a truly immortal disposition,—bearing no exclusive relation to earth or to time, but destined to pass away from the world with the souls in which it exists, to dwell in heaven, and flourish through eternity.

When it is said that it never faileth, we are not merely to understand, that being once planted in the soul, it remains there as the centre and support of all the other practical virtues: that it *will* so remain, is unquestionable, for its continuance is essential to the existence of personal and social religion. A man may change his opinions on some subjects—he may give up some sentiments once believed by him to be truth; but he cannot give up love, without ceasing to be a Christian.

Nor does the Apostle mean that it remains as the spirit of Christianity till the end of time, amidst every change of external administration: that it shall so abide is unquestionable. The genius of piety is unchangeable. This was the temper obligatory upon the primitive Christian; it is obligatory upon us; and it will be no less so upon every future generation. A holier and happier age is in reserve for the Church of Christ; "compared with which, invisible though it be at present, and hid behind the clouds which envelope this dark and troubled scene, the brightest day that has yet shone upon the world is midnight, and the highest splendours that have invested it the shadow of death:" but this glory shall consist in a more perfect and conspicuous manifestation of the grace of love. It is in this, combined with a clearer perception of the truth, that the Christians of the Millennium will surpass those of every preceding age.

But the Apostle's reference is evidently to another world: his eye was upon heaven, and he was looking at things unseen and eternal, when he said that "charity never faileth." He was then soaring on the wing of faith, and exploring the scenes of eternity, among which he saw this celestial plant, surviving the dissolution of the universe, outliving the earthly state of the church, transplanted to the paradise of God, and flourishing in the spirits of just men made perfect near the fountain of light and love.

To give still greater emphasis to what he says of its continuance, he contrasts it with some things, which,

however highly valued by the Corinthian believers, were of a transient duration, and, therefore, of greatly inferior value to this.

"*Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail.*" By prophecies here, we are to understand inspired interpretation of the Scriptures; all new revelations from God, by oral or written communication, for the instruction and edification of the saints. These, so far from belonging to the heavenly state of the church, did not survive its primitive ages. The gift of inspiration was soon withdrawn, the oracle of prophecy was hushed, and all further responses from heaven were denied.

"*Whether there be tongues, they shall cease.*" This, of course, refers to the miraculous power of speaking any language without previous study. This gift also ceased with the other extraordinary endowments of the primitive ages, and bears no relation to the heavenly world. Whether the communication of ideas in the celestial state will be carried on by speech, is, at present, unknown to us; if it be so, what the language will be is beyond conjecture.

"*Whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*" This expression most probably refers to what is called, in the preceding chapter, "the word of knowledge;" and of which the Apostle speaks in the beginning of this chapter—"Though I understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and have not love, I am nothing." It means an inspired knowledge of the types, predictions, and mysteries, of the Old Testament, and of their accomplishment by the facts of the Christian economy. This, also, was among the signs and wonders which were to vanish away; which, having been granted as attestations to the divine authority of the word of God, and for the edification of the church, were discontinued when the canon of Scripture was completed and settled.

Some extend the Apostle's reasoning so far, as to include every kind of our present knowledge; which, as to its imperfect attainments, and inadequate mediums, and present modes of communication, shall be remov-

ed, and give place to a more easy and perfect method of acquiring truth, and a more entire comprehension of its nature and relations.

As to the knowledge of the arts of the practical sciences and of literature, this shall be lost and forgotten, as utterly useless, and as bearing no relation whatever to the celestial state. Ye master spirits, ye commanding geniuses, ye lordly minds, who exhaust the force of your intellect, and lavish its treasures upon themes of mere earthly interest,—see here the termination of all your labours. Scholars, poets, painters, sculptors, warriors, ye who assemble in the temple of fame, amidst the mightiest productions of human skill, to pay homage to each other, to receive the admiration of the world, and to immortalize your names,—giving to your mighty works the full measure of their value, in reference to earth and to time,—admitting that, in this view, they are bright scenes in the history of man; yet still, in reference to heaven and its eternity, they are nothing —less than nothing—and vanity. Not an angel would turn to gaze upon the noblest production of human imagination, nor will a plea be put in by a single inhabitant of heaven, to exempt from the destruction of the last fire the sublimest specimens of human skill. Myriads of volumes have been already lost and forgotten; myriads more are on their way to oblivion; myriads still shall rise, only to vanish;—and of all the accumulations that shall have been made by the time of the Millennium, and which shall have been going on through the longest and the purest age of reason—not one shall be saved from the general conflagration, as worthy to be borne to the heavenly world. "Knowledge shall vanish away."

But not only shall the knowledge contained in the scientific, and literary, and imaginative, productions of men vanish, together with the volumes by which it was circulated; but all theological works,—our creeds, our catechisms, our articles of faith, our bodies of divinity, our works of biblical criticism, our valued,—and justly valued, commentaries,—our sermons, aud our treatises,

—all shall vanish. The knowledge we gain from these sources is not that which will attend us to the skies, and be sufficient for us when we have arrived at the region of cloudless splendour, the element of wisdom, the native land, and dwelling-place of truth.

The introduction of this idea, by the Apostle, has given occasion for one of the most striking digressions from his tract of thought which he ever made. His argument only required him to state that love is better than the gift of knowledge, because the latter shall cease; but he proceeds to show why it shall cease, and ascribes its continuance to its imperfection: he then takes an opportunity to draw one of the most sublime contrasts to be found in the Word of God, between our knowledge in the present world, and our more perfect comprehension of truth in the world that is to come.

And why shall knowledge vanish away? because

"We know in part, and we prophesy in part."

A part only of truth is made known, and, therefore, a part only is received by us. This may imply *that there are many things we do not know at all.* Who can doubt this? Upon the supposition that we were perfectly acquainted with all that is proper to be known, all that could be acquired by the aid of reason and the discoveries of revelation, still we should hear a voice, saying to us, "Lo, these are a part of his ways, but the thunder of his power who can understand?" There are, doubtless, truths of vast importance and of deep interest, which have never yet approached, and, in the present world, never will approach, the horizon of the human understanding. There are paths in the region of truth which the vulture's eye has not seen, and which are hid from the view of all living.

When, on his death-bed, the great NEWTON was congratulated upon the discoveries he had made, he replied, with the modesty usually attendant on vast attainments, "I have been only walking on the shores of

truth, and have, perhaps, picked up a gem or two, of greater value than others; but the vast ocean itself lies all before me." This is strictly correct in reference to the material universe, to which the remark was intended to apply. Of *natural* truth, the ocean, with its depths, its islands, and the continents and kingdoms to which it leads, is all before us. We have only looked upon the surface, and seen some of the objects passing upon it: we have only seen a few land-marks, on one part of one of its shores; but the infinitude of its ample space, and the innumerable objects which that space contains, are yet to be explored. And with respect to the *spiritual* world, although we possess, in the volume of inspiration, a revelation of the most sublime, important, and interesting objects of knowledge; yet, probably, there are truths of which, after all that divines and philosophers have written, we can form no more conception, than we can of the objects of a sixth sense, or than a blind man can of colours. "We know only in part."

It is implied also, that what we do know, *we know but imperfectly*. In some cases, our knowledge is uncertainty, and amounts only to opinion: faith is weak, and mixed with many doubts. We cannot exultingly exclaim, "I know;" we can scarcely say, "I believe." The object sometimes presents itself to our mind, like the sun seen dimly through a mist,—now appearing, and then lost again, in the density of the fog. Now a truth comes upon us, in a thin and shadowy form; we think we see it, but it is again obscured. We only see glimmerings. We perceive appearances, rather than demonstrations; dark outlines, not perfect pictures.

And where no doubt undermines the *certainty* of our knowledge, what narrow limits bound its *extent!* We walk, as through a valley shut in on each side by lofty mountains, whose tops are lost amidst the clouds, whose shadows add to the obscurity of our situation, and whose mighty masses stand between us and the prospect which lies beyond. How imperfect and limited is our knowledge of the great God—of the spirituality of

his nature—of his necessary self-existence from eternity—of his triune essence! How feeble are our conceptions of the complex person of Christ, the God-man Mediator; of the scheme of providence, embracing the history of our world, and of all other worlds; and of the connexion between providence and redemption! How have divines and philosophers been perplexed on the subject of the entrance of moral evil; on the agreement between divine prescience, and the freedom of the human will; between moral inability, and human accountability! How much obscurity hangs, in our view, over many of the operations of nature! how soon do we arrive at ultimate laws, which, for aught we can tell, may be only effects of causes that are hidden from our observation! In what ignorance do we live, of many of the most common occurrences around us. Who has perfect ideas of the essences of things, separate and apart from their qualities—of matter, for instance, or spirit? Who can perfectly conceive how the idea of motion results from that of body, or how the idea of sensation results from that of spirit? On what theme shall we meditate, and not be mortified to find how little progress we can make before we are arrested by insurmountable difficulties? On what eminence shall we take our stand, and to what part of the horizon direct our eye, and not see clouds and shadows resting like a veil upon the prospect? How truly is it said, "We know but in part." Angels must wonder at the limitation of our ideas; and disembodied spirits must be astonished at the mighty bound they make, by that one step which conducts them across the threshold of eternity.

The Apostle illustrates the present imperfection of our knowledge, compared with its future advancement, by two similitudes. The first is, *the difference between the ideas of a child and those of a man.* "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." The meaning of Paul in this verse is,—that our knowledge in the heavenly state will

be as different from, and as superior to, any thing we gain on earth, as the ideas of an adult, in the maturity of his intellectual powers, are to those which he entertained when he was a child. Our knowledge, at present, is that of children; we are not only in the minority, but in the *infancy*, of our minds. Our notions are the opinions of children; our discourses are the lispings of children; our controversies the reasonings of children. The prodigious attainments of those great luminaries, Bacon, Milton, Boyle, Locke, Newton; and in the science of theology, of those great divines, Owen, Howe, Charnock, Baxter, Bates, Butler, Hooker;—all these are but the productions of children, written for the instruction of others less taught than themselves. Yea, the Apostle includes *himself and his writings* in the description—"*We* know in part, and *we* prophesy in part. When *I* was a child, *I* spake as a child; but when *I* became a man, *I* put away childish things." He alludes to his own childish conceits, and puerile simplicity, which had given way to the matured knowledge of his riper years: and, by implication, declares his expectation, that the knowledge which he should gain in the celestial state would be as much above his present views, as they were beyond those which he entertained when he was a child. Yes: that greatest of mere men—that illustrious individual who had been in the third heaven—who had explored, as we imagine, some of the secrets of the unseen world—who had fathomed so much of the depth, measured so much of the height, of truth; even *he* tells us, that *he* was but in his minority. What an idea does it give us of the infinitude of knowledge yet to be obtained, when we are informed that the Bible itself, even the New Testament—that book of books, the work of which it is said, it has God for its author, truth without any mixture of error for its contents, and salvation for its end—is but a book for children, a work for saints in their infancy, a mere elementary treatise on the subject of eternal truth, written by the finger of God, for his family, during their education and novitiate on earth.

The second similitude, by which the present imperfection of our knowledge is set forth, is that very partial acquaintance which we gain with material objects, by looking at them through a glass. "Now we see through a glass, darkly."

Considerable diversity of opinion prevails as to the precise object of the Apostle's allusion in the expression which he here employs. It is admitted that the word in the original literally signifies a mirror; and hence most expositors consider that the comparison is to this article, and that his meaning is, that our knowledge of divine truth in this world, is only of that partial kind which we gain by seeing objects reflected from a mirror. But does this accord with his design, which is to represent the *obscurity* of our present ideas, compared with what we shall know hereafter, when that which is perfect is come? The knowledge we gain of an object that is reflected from a highly polished surface is too accurate to furnish such a comparison. Hence some are of opinion,—and this is the view I take,—that the allusion is to those semi-transparent substances, such as horn and diaphanous stones, which were used in windows before glass was known, and through which objects would be but very dimly seen. Nothing could better accord with the Apostle's purpose than this. How dim and shadowy do those forms appear, which we discover through such a medium: we discern only the mere outline; every thing is seen imperfectly, and many things connected with the object are not seen at all. "We see it through a glass, darkly." The term rendered "darkly" signifies an enigma, a riddle, a form of speech in which one thing is put for another; which, though in some respects like it, is but an obscure representation, and calculated to puzzle those who are required to find out the thing which is thus darkly shadowed forth.

Here it may be proper to inquire why divine truth is at present involved in so much comparative darkness.

It is *designed to accord with the analogy of faith.* We are to walk by faith, which is not only opposed to the

the testimony of sense, but is distinguished also from the clearness and certainty of perfect knowledge.

It *comports also with the purpose of a divine revelation.* There is no doubt but that some of the clouds which envelope the subjects of revealed truth could have been dissipated, and many things put in a still clearer light. A studied caution, a designed reserve, is maintained in some places; for as the Bible is given to be a test of moral disposition, the evidence should be sufficient to demand belief, without being enough to compel it. The Bible affords us light enough to assist us in discharging the duties of this world, and to guide us to glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life; but it concedes nothing to curiosity—nothing to a spirit of restless inquiry. It stands like a waymark on the high road to eternity, and is intended simply to announce what is truth, and the way to its dwelling-place, but not to make known to the traveller all the details of the city to which he is journeying.

And, in another view, this obscurity is *absolutely necessary.* If the disclosure were *more* obscure, it would be beyond our apprehension; we could know nothing; and, in that case, religion could have no existence, or exist only as the blind offspring of ignorance. If it were more cloudy and shadowy, it would have no power to arrest attention or interest the heart: it might, indeed, point to a brighter state, where it would throw off the dense covering in which it had enwrapped itself on earth; but too little of the beauty of truth would be seen to captivate our affections, and to allure us to follow her to that world where she displays her unveiled glories: but as revelation is now given to us, enough of the beauty of truth is seen, to inspire us with a pure affection—enough is concealed, to make us long to see her face to face. And were all the knowledge that it is possible for us to receive actually communicated to us, *who, amidst such acquisitions, could attend to the low pursuits of ordinary affairs?* The immediate effect of such a disclosure would be to produce, so far as real Christians are concerned, a total stagnation of the affairs of this life. All

the studies and pursuits, the arts and the labours, which now employ the activity of man—which support order, or promote happiness,—would lie neglected and abandoned. It is necessary that something of the magnitude of truth should be concealed—something of its effulgence softened—something of its beauty veiled,—or the holy mind of the Christian, absorbed in such a vision, would find all that is important in life utterly insignificant, and all that is attractive tasteless and insipid. Disturbed in his lofty meditations, and interrupted in his ecstasies, by the din of business, and the obtrusion of low, grovelling cares, and judging that scenes of secular activity unfitted him for communion with this heavenly visitant,—he would retire from the social haunts of men, to converse with truth in the solitude of the hermitage or the silence of the desert. So necessary is it to hang a veil on the too dazzling brightness of divine subjects.

This partial obscurity is also necessary, *on account of the feebleness and limited extent of our faculties.* Our minds could no more bear to look upon the unmitigated glory of divine truth, than the eye of an infant could sustain the unsoftened effulgence of the mid-day sun. Our minds cannot grasp, in its full extent, one single subject out of all the mighty theory. Some vague idea may be formed of the almost illimitable range of this plan, when we recollect that its developement is to employ our understanding in the highest state of intellectual perfection, and to employ it, not for a measured term, but through the countless ages of an endless existence. The study, the discovery, the enjoyment, of truth will form one of the chief felicities of the heavenly state: but what must that knowledge be, which is to afford something new and interesting through eternity? how can this be obtained by man in the infancy of his existence upon earth? There are subjects yet to be known, which would have no less surpassed the understanding of Newton, than his profound discoveries in science would, the mind of a child.

No wonder, then, that we walk at present amidst

shades and glimmerings. But how humbling is this view of the subject to the pride of intellect!" "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." The thinking mind is the glory of our nature; it is the candle of the Lord shining "in the earthly house of our tabernacle," and giving light to all the faculties of our soul, to guide their operations, and to direct them in their appropriate business. To what an immeasurable elevation does it raise man above the brute creation! What wonders it has achieved—what stupendous monuments of wisdom and power it has raised! Who can mention the names of the giants of the world of mind, and especially who can survey the productions of their genius, without having high notions of the capacities of the human understanding? But what are all the works of the greatest theologians, the profoundest philosophers, when compared with the knowledge of another world, but as the ideas of one who "thought as a child, and spake as a child!" Shall *any* man—shall the greatest of men—be proud of *their* modicum of knowledge, vain of *their* childish notions, puffed up with their poor scantling of information? Were the meanest and least of all the spirits of just men made perfect to come down and catechise a synod of the greatest divines on earth, how soon would he confound them amidst their most sagacious discoveries and most celebrated works. What infantine conceptions, what puerile conceits, could be found out in their most finished productions! So little reason has man for the pride of understanding—so much cause to clothe himself with the garment of humility.

HEAVEN A STATE OF PERFECT KNOWLEDGE.

"But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know but in part; but then shall I know, even as I am known."

All these expressions refer to the celestial world, and unite to teach us that heaven is a state of perfect knowledge. Here we know only part of truth; then we shall know the whole: here we know nothing but in a partial manner; there we shall know every thing completely: here we see truth, only as we perceive the dark shadow of a man, through a dense medium; there we shall behold it as clearly as we do the same man when we see him face to face: there we shall know truth, even as we are known by superior beings, *i. e.* with as much certainty, though not with the same comprehension.

This last expression has been sometimes explained, as conveying the intimation that we shall recognize each other in the celestial state. "We shall know others, even as we are known by them." Many reasons concur to produce the expectation of this mutual recognition. It is almost impossible to suppose that we shall maintain our identity, not only of person but of character; and also the reminiscence of our earthly existence and history; without believing the interesting truth, that we shall again be mutually known to each other in the heavenly world. This is one of the sentiments which the sacred writers rather take for granted than stop to prove. But certainly this is not the meaning of the passage now under consideration. The

Apostle here speaks of our knowledge of things, not of persons.

The felicity of the celestial state will, doubtless, include every thing that can yield delight to a corporeal, social, intellectual, and moral creature. It is eternal life—everlasting existence, attended by every thing that can render existence a blessing. It is life, in the fullest sense of the term—life in the highest degree of perfection. The glorified body will probably retain the organs of sound and sight,—the purest of the senses,—and thus become the inlet of the most pleasurable sensations; while it will be for ever free from the cravings of appetite, the languor of sickness, the distress of pain, the weariness of labour. The social impulse will be gratified by the sublime converse of "the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect." The moral feelings will all combine in the most unsullied purity; while the intellect will be irradiated by the light of eternal truth. The heart will thus repose in the enjoyment of the chief good, and the mind in the contemplation of the first truth; beyond which nothing remains to be enjoyed—nothing to be known.

But we are now considering heaven under the representation of a state of knowledge, and as an *intellectual* condition. In this light the Scriptures frequently speak of the glory to be revealed. They call it an inheritance "in light;" they describe it as a world where there is no night. There "we shall see him as he is," "behold his glory," "see him face to face:" expressions which relate more to the eyes of the mind than to those of the body. Perhaps we do not sufficiently contemplate heaven in this view of it. The greater part of mankind are taken up with mere sensations, and are but little acquainted with the pure enjoyment connected with the perception of evidence and the apprehension of truth. The rapturous exclamation, "I have found it!" is rarely uttered by the multitude, over anything but the acquisition of wealth or the gratification of appetite. But those who have been engaged in any mea-

sure in intellectual pursuits, will be able to appreciate the pleasures of knowledge. Evidence is to the mind like light to the eye, and the perception of truth, as water to the thirsty. Even the comparatively barren sciences of numbers and figures, which exclude the operation of the fancy, and present nothing to exercise the passions or gratify the imagination, the truths of which derive all their interest from the evidence by which they are supported, or the manner in which they are applied to other purposes ;—yes; even these are a source of high and pure enjoyment to the human mind, which is ever seeking to arrive at infallible certainty, and can repose nowhere else. What exquisite delight has been experienced by some men, when, after a long process of reasoning or a fatiguing course of experiments, they have at length arrived at a demonstration. If, then, in the present world, where the subjects of our research are often so insignificant, where our knowledge is obtained with such labour, is limited by so much ignorance, and blended with so much error; if amidst such circumstances the pleasure of knowledge be so great,—what will it be in the heavenly state ?

Let us consider what will be the OBJECTS of our knowledge.

If we may be allowed the expression, we shall know all things that are knowable, so far as an acquaintance with them will contribute to our felicity. We shall know every thing that is essential to the right performance of duty, or to the most perfect gratification of our intellect—all that lies within our proper sphere or compass as creatures.

We shall *perfectly comprehend all the laws which govern the material world.* The discovery of these are now considered to be among the most dignified and gratifying employments of the human understanding. It was his discoveries in natural philosophy which gave to our great Newton his celebrity. What a high station in the records of fame is assigned to Linneus, La Place, Davy, and Watt, and to others, who have explored the secrets and explained the laws of nature ! They are

ranked among the illustrious members and most valuable benefactors of their species. They are looked up to with a kind of semi-idolatry, and their praises are continually chanted for their vast achievements, not only in adding to the stock of knowledge, but in accumulating fresh honours upon human nature. What sublime and astonishing facts are included in the sciences of astronomy, optics, chemistry! how much of the power, wisdom, and goodness, of the divine Architect are displayed in the works of creation!—yet these things are now hidden from a great portion of the redeemed, who, by the disadvantages of their education, are shut out from these sources of knowledge. But they will be admitted to them in heaven. Creation will not be destroyed at the judgment day, but only purified. The vast and splendid machine will not then be thrown aside, broken up, and consigned to oblivion. Nothing which the hand of the Creator hath framed shall be forgotten. The brilliant scenes which are now passing before our eyes, but on which many even regenerated minds look without understanding them, are not a mere pageant. Beautiful was the remark of the eminently pious Bishop Hall, who, on being told in his old age that his views of astronomy were not quite correct, replied, "Well! it may be so; but I am soon going to heaven, and as I shall take the stars in my way, I must leave the subject till then, when every mistake will be rectified." So completely will all the disadvantages of our earthly condition be removed in heaven, whether those disadvantages arise from the Christian being born in an age when knowledge is in its infancy, or amidst those privations of poverty which deny him access to the sources of information. In the hour of death, the pious but illiterate tenant of the cottage, on whose mind the orb of science never rose, though the sun of righteousness poured upon it the light of a spiritual illumination, ascends above the disadvantages of education, makes a glorious transition from the shades of ignorance, in which he dwelt upon earth, into the cloudless transparency of the firmament on high. His na-

tural faculties, compressed and enfeebled now by the circumstances of his birth, shall then expand to a comprehension, and attain to a vigour, probably not surpassed by the loftiest of the human race; and he, too, shall know in heaven, the works of the God of nature, as he knew below, and shall still better know above, the works of the God of grace.

Providence will form another mighty range of inquiry, and another source of delightful knowledge in heaven. By providence, we mean God's moral government of the universe—the course of the divine administration towards rational and moral creatures: that mighty scheme, which commenced its application before time was born, or the foundations of the earth were laid; which embraces the annals of other worlds besides ours; which includes the history of angels, men, and devils. Providence comprises the whole range of events, which have taken place from the formation of the first creature, to the last moment of time, with all the tendencies, reasons, connexions, and results, of things; the separate existence of each individual, with the continuation and influence of the whole, in one harmonious scheme. Providence is now full of mysteries. We are puzzled at almost every step. Innumerable are the events over which, after having in vain endeavoured to sound their depth with the line of our reason, we must exclaim, "O the depth!" But we shall know all; why sin was permitted, and how it entered, with all the attendant train of incomprehensible results which followed its introduction into the moral universe. It will then be made apparent to us, why so long a period elapsed between the first promise of a Saviour, and his incarnation, sufferings, and death: why, for so many ages, the world was left in ignorance, sin, and misery: why such errors were permitted to enter the church; and so soon, and so extensively, to corrupt the simplicity and deform the beauty of the Christian profession: why the man of Sin was suffered to establish his seat in the temple of Christ; to exalt himself above all that is called God; to utter his blasphemy; to shed the blood of the saints; and so long

to spread the clouds of superstition, and the shades of death, over Christendom: why the impostor of Mecca was allowed to arise, and for so many ages to render a large portion of the earth inaccessible to the rays of the Sun of Righteousness: why idolatry, with all its sanguinary deities, and all its bloody and obscene rites, was left so long to insult the heavens, to pollute the earth, and to curse mankind. What deep, unfathomable mysteries are these! How confounding to our reason, and how utterly beyond our research! What astonishment and delight, what inconceivable emotions, will be produced by the gradual unfolding of the mighty scheme, by the progressive discoveries of the connexions and issues of things, and the wondrous display of divine glory which will be made by the whole. How shall we be enraptured to find, that those events which now so confound us, were dark only by excess of wisdom, and that those facts which so often distressed us upon earth were but the more sombre shades of the perfect picture! What manifestations of Deity will then be made, when God shall admit us to his cabinet, and lay open to us the arcana of his government!

And, doubtless, we shall not only see the harmony and wisdom of Providence, in its general aspect and its more comprehensive combinations and arrangements, but *in its particular bearing on our own private and personal history.* The most important and interesting chapter in the volume of universal history is, to us, that which contains the record of *our* life. What clouds and shadows still rest, and in the present state ever must rest, upon our obscure and humble annals. How often is Jehovah, in his dealings with us, a God that hideth himself! how often does he wrap himself in clouds, and pursue his path upon the waters, where we can neither see his goings nor trace his footsteps! How many of his dispensations are inexplicable! and of his judgments, how many are unfathomable by the short line of our reason! But whatever we know not now, we shall know hereafter: the crooked will be made straight, the cloud of darkness will be scattered, and all his conduct towards

us placed in the broad daylight of eternity. We shall see the connexion which our individual history bears with the general scheme of providence; and perceive how, notwithstanding our insignificance, our existence was no less necessary to the perfection of the whole plan, than that of the great ones of the earth. We shall see how all the varying and numerous, and seemingly opposite, events of our history were combined into one gracious purpose of mercy, which was most perfectly wise in all its combinations: now we *believe* that "all things work together for good;" then we shall *see how* this end was accomplished by events, which, at the time, put us to so much grief, and involved us in so much surprise. Delightful, most delightful will it be, to retrace our winding and often gloomy course, and discern at each change and turning the reason of the occurrence, and the wisdom of God: delightful will it be, to discern the influence which all our temporal circumstances, all our disappointments, losses, and perplexities, had upon our permanent and celestial happiness. How much of divine wisdom, power, goodness, and faithfulness, will our short and humble history present; and what rapturous fervour will the discovery give to the song of praise which we shall utter before the throne of God and the Lamb.

Revelation, as containing the scheme of human redemption by Jesus Christ, will be another object of our study, and source of knowledge. The Bible is given to make God known; and one page of the Bible, yea one verse, makes known more of God than all the volume of nature. But, after all, how little do we know of God, of his essence, of his triune mode of subsistence, of his natural perfections, of his moral attributes? What an unfathomable mystery is Deity! In what a pavilion of darkness does Jehovah dwell! Who, by searching, can find out God? In heaven we shall know him, for we shall see him face to face; we shall behold his glory, and see him as he is. We shall have as perfect an acquaintance with the divine character, as a finite mind can attain to; and in this one object, shall find employment

and bliss through eternity. We shall never exhaust this theme. Eternity is necessary to study that which is infinite.

We shall there comprehend, so far as it can be done by a finite mind, the complex person of Jesus Christ. We cannot now understand this; "great is the mystery of Godliness,—God manifest in the flesh;" but what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. Then will the cross be seen, as the central point of the divine administration, bright with ten thousand glories, and sending out its beams to the extremity of the moral system. The ruin of the world by its federal connexion with Adam; the election of the Jews, and the long abandonment of the Gentiles; the slow advance of Christianity to its millennial reign and triumph; the bearing of redemption upon other orders of beings beside man; the difficulties which hang like impenetrable clouds upon the doctrines of personal election, regeneration, perseverance, the freedom of the will viewed in connexion with divine prescience and predestination;—all, all will be laid open to the view of glorified saints in heaven. Every thing in the Scriptures, which is now dark, shall be made light. A reconciling point shall be found for every seeming contradiction, and the faith and patience of the saints be rewarded, for having received the truth on the credit of him who spoke it, without demanding to see before they believed.

Such shall be the sources of knowledge in heaven. O the bliss of eternally drinking in knowledge from such fountains!

We may now consider THE ADVANTAGES which the heavenly state will possess for the acquisition of knowledge.

The soul will there be perfect in holiness, and thus the understanding will be delivered from the disturbing and bewildering influence of sin. In our present state of imperfection, the depravity of our nature contracts and misdirects our judgment: the corruptions of the heart send up a mist, which veils the lustre of truth, and conceals its extent and glory from the mind. The judg-

ment cannot now see spiritual objects in all their range, and order, and beauty, because of sin. But in heaven this contracting and darkening influence will cease for ever. No evil bias, no sinful prejudice, will ever warp the judgment: no disease of the soul will dim its eye or enfeeble its power. With eagle pinion it will soar to the fountain of radiance, and with eagle vision bear the full blaze of its glory. *The natural faculty of the mind will then attain to its full maturity of strength.* The mind is here in its infancy: there it will come to its age. Even the intellects of the greatest geniuses, while on earth, are but human minds in childhood, as we have already considered, and their most prodigious efforts but as infantine exercises. Here they only tried their powers: but in heaven the mind will put forth to their full extent all those wondrous faculties which are now shut up and compressed in our nature, for want of room and opportunity to expand. In heaven, *we shall not be diverted and called off from the pursuit of truth by the inferior interests of the body:* the soul will not be prevented from making excursions into the regions of light, by the cares, wants, and anxieties, which abound in this state of being, but will be left at leisure to pursue her sublime researches. She will have nothing to hinder the acquirement and enjoyment of knowledge. To crown all, heaven is an *eternal state*, and everlasting ages will be afforded through which the glorified mind will carry on its pursuits. Were the term of human life again protracted to the antediluvian age, what vast attainments would be made by us all in the discovery of truth! What, then, must it be to have eternity through which to grow in knowledge?

We might notice the CHARACTERS of our knowledge, It will be *perfect:* by which we are not to understand that it will be as complete as the nature of things admits of, for we should then possess a comprehension equal to that of God. We cannot perfectly know every thing as it may be known: our ideas of many things must be limited, especially those which relate to the divine nature. By perfection, we mean freedom from error:

our knowledge will be free from all admixture of doubt, suspense, and fallacy; our attainments will be bounded only by our capacity; there will, perhaps, be a gradation of mind in heaven, no less obviously marked than that which exists on earth; but all capacities will be filled.

Our knowledge will doubtless be *progressive*. Increase of ideas is, perhaps, in the case of a creature, essential to felicity. We now find more pleasure in receiving a new and important truth, than we experience in all we before possessed. A state in which there remains nothing more to be known, conveys not an idea of happiness so vividly as that where the delight of discovering something new is ever added to the joy of contemplating so much that is old. What a view of heaven!—An eternal advance in the most important knowledge; an everlasting accumulation of ideas; an interminable progression in truth. In the march of the mind through intellectual and moral perfection, there is no period set: this perfection of the just is for ever carrying on—is carrying on, but shall never come to a close. God shall behold his creation for ever beautifying in his eyes, for ever drawing near to himself, yet still infinitely distant from him, the fountain of all goodness. There is not in religion a more joyful or triumphant consideration than this perpetual progress which the soul makes in the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at its ultimate period. Here truth has the advantage of fable. No fiction, however bold, presents to us a conception so elevating and astonishing as this interminable line of heavenly excellence. To look upon the glorified spirit, as going on from strength to strength, adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge; making approaches to goodness which is infinite; for ever adorning the heavens with new beauties, and brightening in the splendours of moral glory through the ages of eternity;—has something in it so transcendent, as to satisfy the most unbounded ambition of an immortal spirit. Christian! does not thy heart glow at the thought that there is a time marked out in

the annals of heaven, when thou shalt be what the angels now are; when thou shalt shine with that glory in which principalities now appear; and when, in full communion with the Most High, thou shalt "see him as he is?"

How our knowledge in heaven will be *acquired*, whether by testimony, by immediate revelation, or by some method of mental application, it would be idle to speculate. We know that whatever mode is determined upon by God, will promote, and not interrupt, our felicity; we shall have nothing of the weariness of study —nothing of the anxiety of doubt—nothing of the torture of suspense. Ideas will flow into the soul with the same ease and pleasure on our part as rays of light come to the bodily eye.

Whatever knowledge we gain in heaven will be *transforming:* it will not be mere opinion, or uninfluential speculation. All our ideas will be as fuel, to feed the flame of love, which will then burn upon the altar of the soul: all will be quickening, penetrating, influential. Our opinions will be principles of action. Every thing will lead us to see more of God, to love him with a more intense glow of holy affection, and to be more conformed to him. The light of truth will ever be associated with the warmth of love. "We shall be like God, *for* we shall see him as he is."

It is difficult to find, in the volume of revelation, a stronger internal evidence of its divine original, than the view it gives of the celestial state, combining, as it does, the perfection of knowledge and of purity. Every other representation which has been given of heaven, bears the mark of an earthly source,—the proof of being a human device. As, in seeking for a Deity, man found the prototype in his own passions, when he had abandoned the one living and true God; so, in forming a heaven, he collected all the materials from the objects of his own fleshly delights. The Elysium of the Greeks and the Romans; the Hall of the Scandinavians; the Paradise of the Mahometans; the fantastic abodes of the departed Hindoos;—are all adapted to their de-

praved appetites, and were suggested by their corrupt imaginations. Beyond the pleasures of a seraglio, of a field of glory, or of a hall resounding with the shout of victory—beyond the gratification of sense—man, when left to himself, never looked for the happiness which is to constitute his paradise. A heaven made up of perfect knowledge, and of perfect love, is a vision entirely and exclusively divine, and which never beamed upon the human understanding till the splendid image came upon it from the word of God. How worthy of God is such a representation of celestial bliss! It is an emanation from his own nature, as thus described:—"God is light: God is love." The glorious reality is evidently the provision of his own wisdom and grace; and the sublime description of it in the Scriptures, is as evidently the delineation of his own finger.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF LOVE.

"Now abide these three, Faith, Hope, Charity; but the greatest of these is Charity."

Such is the triune nature of true religion, as described by an inspired penman; of that religion about which myriads of volumes have been written, and so many controversies have been agitated. How short and how simple the account; within how narrow a compass does it lie; and how easily understood, might one have expected, would have been a subject expressed in terms so familiar as these. This beautiful verse has furnished the arts with one of their most exquisite subjects: poets have sung the praises of faith, hope, and charity; the painter has exhibited the holy three in all the glowing colours of his pencil; and the sculptor has given them in the pure and almost breathing forms of his marble; while the orator has employed them as the ornaments of his eloquence. But our orators, poets, sculptors, and painters, have strangely misunderstood them, and too often proved that they knew nothing of them but as the abstractions of their genius: what they presented to the eye were mere earthly forms, which bore no resemblance to these divine and spiritual graces: and multitudes have gazed, with admiration kindling into rapture, on the productions of the artist,

who at the same time had no taste for the virtues described by the Apostle. Religion is a thing essentially different from a regard to classic elegance; not indeed that it is opposed to it, for, as it refines the heart, it may be supposed to exert a favourable influence on the understanding, and by correcting the *moral* taste, to give a still clearer perception of the sublime and the beautiful. It is greatly to be questioned, however, whether religion has not received more injury than benefit from the fine arts; whether men have not become carelessly familiar with the more awful realities of truth, by the exhibition of the poet, the painter, and the engraver; and whether they have not mistaken those sensibilities which have been awakened by a contemplation of the more tender and touching scenes of revelation, as described upon the canvass or the marble, for the emotions of true piety. Perhaps the "Paradise Lost" has done very little to produce any serious concern to avoid everlasting misery; "The Descent from the Cross" by Rubens, or the "Transfiguration" by Raphael, as little, to draw the heart to the great objects of Christianity. Innumerable representations, and many of them very splendid productions too, have been given of Faith, Hope, and Charity; and doubtless by these means many kindly emotions have been called for awhile into exercise, which, after all, were nothing but a transient effect of the imagination upon the feelings. It is of vast consequence that we should recollect that no affections are entitled to the character of religion, but such as are excited by a distinct perception of revealed truth. It is not the emotion awakened by a picture presented to the eye, nor by a sound addressed to the ear, but by the contemplation of a fact, or a statement, laid before the mind, that constitutes piety. We now proceed to the subject of this chapter.

Faith is the belief of testimony, accompanied, if the testimony be delivered by a living individual, by a disposition to depend upon his veracity; and, if it relate to something in which we are interested, with an expectation of the fulfilment of the promise. In refer-

ence to spiritual things, it means a firm persuasion of the truth of what God has revealed in his word. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen:" or, as the passage is rendered by some, "Faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." It is a belief, not only that the Bible is true, but of the truth contained in the Bible: it is not merely a perception of the evidences of Christianity, as a divine revelation, but also a perception of the truth of its doctrines. *General* faith, means a belief of all that God has revealed in the Scriptures, whether it be invitation or promise, command or threatening, prophecy or history; and it is this that the Apostle describes in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. Faith in Christ, or *justifying faith*, relates to that part of the divine word which testifies concerning the person and work of the Redeemer. Saving belief takes into its view everything contained in the Word of God, but its special object is the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world: just as the eye of a condemned criminal, at the place of execution, beholds the assembled multitude, the fatal tree, and the messenger whom he sees hastening with the reprieve; but it is on the latter that his view is fixed with the greatest steadiness and delight. Faith in Christ, then, is a full persuasion of the truth of the glorious Gospel concerning *Him*, accompanied by a full confidence in his veracity, and an expectation of the fulfilment of his word. It is not a mere notion, a purely intellectual act; but certainly implies an exercise of the will. It is the belief of something spoken by a living person, and necessarily involves a confidence in *his* veracity; it is something interesting to *us*, and must contain expectation. Hence it is represented by the Apostle as synonymous with the act of committing the soul into the hands of Christ. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have *committed* to him." If it were a purely intellectual act, how could it be the subject of com-

mand or the matter of duty?—For can that which is exclusively mental contain either moral good or evil? If faith be purely intellectual, must not unbelief, its opposite, be the same? But it is said, that as the disposition influences the judgment, and leads to either faith or unbelief, according to the state of the heart, the moral excellence of one, and the turpitude of the other, arises from its cause. But is not the Scripture most explicit in its condemnation of unbelief, as evil in itself; and in its commendation of faith, as morally excellent? The question is not what is the meaning of the term faith, as employed by metaphysicians, but as employed by the Apostles; and this meaning can be gathered only from their writings, in which many terms are employed with a signification somewhat different to that in which they are employed in ordinary discourse. Justification, for instance, in reference to ordinary affairs, means the act of declaring an accused person to be innocent of the charge brought against him; but, as the term is used by the sacred writers, means nothing more than treating a person acknowledged to be guilty, as righteous, for the sake of the righteousness of Christ.

Faith is not that which constitutes the ground of our acceptance with God, but which places us upon that ground; it is not our justifying righteousness, but that which unites us to Christ, and appropriates his righteousness to ourselves. It is true that a different view seems to be given by the Apostle, when he says, quoting the Old Testament expression, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness." It would seem from hence, and so it has been contended, that his faith was accepted in lieu of his obedience, as the matter of his righteousness, and the ground of his acceptance with God. But a more correct translation of the passage will rectify this mistake, and prevent what must be considered a fundamental error on the very important doctrine of justification by faith. "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him 'to,'

'in order to,' or 'towards,' his justification."* It is not, then, *for* our faith, but by it, that we are justified: faith, as an act of ours, is no more the meritorious ground of our justification than any other of our performances; for, if it were, we should still be justified by works,—as faith is as much a work as penitence. The Apostle is sufficiently explicit on this head, where he says, "But now the righteousness of God without law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned towards justification." "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."

Hope is the desire and expectation of those future good things which God has promised in his word. Faith believes the promise, hope desires its fulfilment. It is essential to hope, that its object be some *good* thing, either supposed or real; for no one can desire that which is evil, *as* evil: and its object must be something *future;* for who expects that of which he is already in possession? Desire, without expectation, is either mere wishing, or else despondency; expectation, without desire, is either indifference or dread: the union of both constitutes hope. The object of Christian hope is thus stated by the Apostles:—"Beloved,

* Great efforts have been made by the opponents of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers for their justification, and especially by M'Knight, to overturn this doctrine, by the aid of the text we are now considering. This critic thought he had found in this passage a triumphant proof that our own faith, or act of believing, and not Christ's obedience unto death, constitutes our justifying righteousness, in lieu of our own good works. It is a little remarkable that so acute a critic should have overlooked the force of the Greek preposition (εις,) not only as established by other scholars, but by himself: for in his preliminary Essay on the meaning of Greek Particles, which he has prefixed to his Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, although he gives fourteen different but harmonious renderings of this preposition, the meaning of "for," or, "in lieu of," has no place. We have "concerning," "in order to," "towards," but not "for:" and yet he has given it this meaning in the text.

now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; and every man that hath this hope in him" [in Christ] "purifieth himself, even as he is pure." Paul represents it as that which the whole rational creation has groaned after, ever since the entrance of sin into the world. "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."*

* Rom. viii. 18—25. This passage has been thought to contain inexplicable difficulties, and to have been in the mind of the Apostle Peter when he spoke of the things hard to be understood in the writings of Paul. Upon this text some have raised the benevolent, but, as it strikes me, the groundless, hypothesis of the resurrection of the brute creation. If we are willing to be guided by the generally acknowledged canon of interpretation, of explaining a difficult passage by the context, we shall find a light which will conduct us through the intricacies of this text, and illuminate our course as we proceed. If we examine the context, we shall find, both from what precedes and what follows, that the Apostle is speaking of the future happiness of the righteous. The passage is introduced thus: "*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;*" then follows the expression, "*for the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God;*" or, as it might be rendered, "*looketh for the revelation of the sons of God;*" *i. e.* the glory to be revealed, of which he had just spoken. Next comes a parenthetical description of the present earthly and temporal condition of the moral creation, and how it was brought into this condition. "*For*

Christian hope is not a mere feeble and fluctuating expectation of eternal happiness, partaking more of the nature of uncertainty than of confidence; for it is, by

the creature was made subject to vanity;" *i. e.* to the misery of this present world, terminating in death; "*not willingly,*" not on account of their own personal transgression, "*but by him who hath subjected the same;*" *i. e.* Adam, their natural root and federal head. The expression, "*in hope,*" should be taken from the end of the twentieth verse, and placed at the commencement of the twenty-first; the conjunction (ὅτι) should be translated "*that,*" instead of "*because;*" and the twenty-first verse, connected with the nineteenth, allowing for the intervening parenthesis, would thus read; "*The earnest expectation of the creature looketh for the revelation of the sons of God; in hope that the creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption;*" *i. e.* death; to which the Apostle afterwards opposes "*the redemption of the body,*" or the resurrection into the glorious liberty of the children of God. "*For we know that the whole creation,*" or every rational creature, "*groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they; i. e.* the whole heathen world; "*but ourselves,*" the believers in the Gospel of Christ, "*who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, namely, the redemption of our body,*"—the resurrection, and consequent full revelation, of our dignity and immortal glory as the sons of God.

Such is the meaning of this passage, in which the Apostle, to give importance to the subject of future glory, represents it as the object of longing desire to the whole rational creation, the various tribes of which are exhibited as lifting up their heads from beneath the bondage of misery and death, and directing an exploring eye and eager hope towards IMMORTALITY; as that alone which could relieve their sorrows, and satisfy their desires. They knew not with certainty that there was such a state; their notions were obscure and fluctuating; it was rather a wish than a belief: but it was that which they may be truly said to have groaned after, as what alone could compensate for the sorrows and the brevity of human life. It is no objection to this view of the passage, to say that the heathen could be scarcely said, in their state of ignorance, to hope to be delivered "from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God:" for things are frequently set forth by the sacred writers, not as they are actually contemplated by the persons in connexion with whom they are introduced, but as they are in themselves. Thus, Christ is called the "desire of all nations;" not that all nations really desired him, but desired happiness, which his advent alone could introduce. So, in this case, every creature longs for that immortality, or future state of happiness, which is in itself, though not contemplated as such by them, the glorious revelation of the sons of God. This most striking and beautiful passage has no reference to the brute creation, as groaning under the effects of man's sin, and from which they will be delivered by a resurrection; no reference to any physical change to be produced during the Millennium in the material world, now by a bold figure represented as burdened and pained by human guilt; for what has this to do with the context, or with the design of the Apostle, which is to comfort believers under the sufferings of this mortal state? but it relates to that glory, honour, and eternal life,

a beautiful figure of speech, called a sure and stedfast anchor; and in other places, without a figure, it is called a lively hope, a good hope, and a confident one; and we are also admonished to go on to *the full assurance of hope:* expressions, especially the last, which amount to the highest degree of confident and triumphant expectation. Many Christians seem to err on this subject, by supposing that the grace of which we are now speaking, means nothing more than a state of mind, partaking of so much doubt, as leaves them very little above the level of absolute despondency. Hope must ever be in proportion to our faith; if the latter be weak, the former will inevitably be so too.

It will be perceived, that although these three graces are, in some respects, very different, yet there are others in which they have points of strong resemblance. Faith has something of the expectation of hope, and hope something of the desire of love. Hope touches faith at the point of expectation; love touches hope at the point of desire: and thus, like the colours of the rainbow, maintain their distinction, while, at the same time, they soften down into each other by almost insensible degrees.

But how are we to understand the Apostle, when he says, "there *remain* these three?" He here alludes to the miraculous operations of the primitive church, and contrasts with their transient existence the permanent continuance in the Christian church of these cardinal virtues. Miracles were introduced to establish the credibility of the Gospel testimony, and having delivered their evidence, retired for ever; but faith, and hope, and love, are to remain as the very essentials of true religion. Particular forms of church government are only the attire which piety wears, or the habitation in which it dwells; but these graces are the body, soul, and

which God has promised to them that love him; in reference to which he so sublimely affirms, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." The view here given is that which is taken also by Hammond and M'Knight.

spirit, of vital religion. When these are no longer to be found on earth, godliness may be said to be retired and gone.

But are these the only Christian virtues which have outlived the age of miracles, and which are destined still to live and flourish on the earth? Certainly not. Penitence, temperance; yea, whatsoever things are true; whatsoever things are honest; whatsoever things are just; whatsoever things are lovely; whatsoever things are of good report;—are as permanent and as strong in their obligations, as faith, and hope, and love: but these three either represent, or imply, or excel, all others. They are the main trunk, from which all others issue as the branches, and by which they are supported.

"Now abideth faith, hope, charity; but the *greatest* of these is charity!" Love among the Christian virtues is, as poets have described Gabriel among archangels, a seraph loftier than all the seraph train. But we are not to suppose that it was the Apostle's intention to depreciate the value and importance of the other two. What can be more important and necessary than the faith by which we are united to Christ, and justified in the sight of God; by which we purify our hearts and overcome the world? Turn to the eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, where the sacred writer seems to conduct you into the temple of Christianity; and after exhibiting the names, and the statues, and the recorded deeds, of the heroes of the church, and displaying before you the spoils they have won in the battles of the Lord, says to you, "Behold the triumphs of faith!" Faith is the means of love: hence said the Apostle, "Faith, which worketh by love." Nor could it be his intention to depreciate hope, which is called, "the anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, which entereth into that within the veil:" of which it is said, "we are saved by hope;" and every man that hath this hope, "purifieth himself, even as he is pure."

Much less are we warranted, from this expression, to *select* love, as the exclusive object of our pursuit, and to cultivate it to the neglect of the other two. Separate

from them it can have no existence. Any attempt to build it up without them, is like the effort to raise a superstructure without a foundation. "*Add* to your faith, brotherly kindness and charity," says the Apostle. It is only as we believe the testimony of God's love to us, which is contained in the Gospel, that we can possess Christian charity to our fellow-men.

What the Apostle means is, *that there are some views of love, in which it must be allowed to possess a higher degree of moral excellence than either faith or hope.*

1. It is the END *which faith and hope are the means of producing.* Love is what might be called an *ultimate* virtue; but faith and hope subordinate ones. Justification itself is but part of the divine means for bringing the soul of man into a state of moral perfection. The ultimate end to be obtained by redemption is the restoration of the image of God to the human spirit; and pardon is the introductory and subsidiary means. Hence faith, by which we are justified, is an exercise of mind, which produces, and is intended to produce, in us a conformity to the divine character. It is not a grace which terminates in itself, without being calculated or designed to originate and support any thing else, which is the case with love. Sanctity is the end of truth: so our Lord teaches us—"Sanctify them by the truth." The truth is received into the mind by faith, that it may impart sanctity, which includes love. Similar remarks will apply to hope, of which it is said, "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself." Christian charity, then, attains this eminence by being the ultimate virtue, to which the other two refer. It is that moral condition of the soul, which it is the aim and purpose of all things to produce.

2. *Love is a* SOCIAL *grace, while faith and hope are exercised in reference to ourselves.* We believe and hope, with an immediate regard to our own happiness; but in the exercise of love, we regard the happiness of mankind. Christian charity is a constant efflux of benevolent feeling, from the pure fountain of a heart devoted to the well-being of our species; faith and hope are the

channels by which we receive the streams of peace and joy, from the fulness of God. By the latter, we are recipients of happiness; by the former we are its distributors: by believing, we rejoice; by loving, we awaken the joys of others: by one, we become the heirs of salvation, who are ministered to by angels; by the other, we become ministering angels in our turn. What a philanthropist must that man be, who cultivates, and carries to even a tolerable perfection, the disposition so beautifully described in this chapter, and who displays all its properties in his intercourse with society: how must such an individual bless all with whom he has to do; as he pursues his holy career, sorrow is alleviated, care is mitigated, want supplied, wickedness reformed by his efforts: the groans of creation are hushed, and the tears of humanity wiped away, by his divine charity; and he becomes, in his measure, like that heavenly visitant in our world, of whom it is said, "He went about doing good."

Survey with admiration and delight the mighty operations, and the splendid achievements, of this powerful and benevolent principle, as they are to be seen within, and only within, the hallowed pale of Christianity. What are all the numerous and diversified institutions in our own land, where houseless poverty has found a home; craving hunger, a supply; forsaken infancy, a protector; helpless age, a refuge; ignorance, an instructor; penitence, a comforter; virtue a defence;—but the triumphs and glories of love? What are all those sublime combinations of human energies, property, and influence, which have been formed for the illumination, reformation, and salvation of the human race? what Bible Societies, Missionary Societies, Tract Societies, Anti-slavery Societies, Peace Societies,—but the mighty monuments of that love, "which seeketh not her own, and is kind?" What are the tears of commiseration, which flow for human sorrows, but the drops that fall from the eye of love? What the joy that is excited by the sight of happiness, but the smiles of love? What was it that made the great Apostle of the Gentiles will-

ing, not only to bear any accumulation of suffering, indignity, and reproach, but to pour out his blood as a libation for others, and even to be accursed from Christ for his kinsmen, and mankind in general?—Love! What is it that renders the modern missionary willing to go into perpetual exile, from the land of his fathers and of his birth, to spend the future years of his life, and find, at last, a grave amidst the sands of Africa, or the snows of Greenland; willing to exchange the society and polished intercourse of Europeans, for savages, whose minds are brutishly ignorant, and whose manners are disgustingly offensive; willing to quit the land of Sabbaths, and of Bibles, and of churches, for regions over which the demon of superstition has extended his horrid sway, and beneath whose yoke nothing is to be seen, but orgies, in which lust and cruelty struggle for pre-eminence?—Love! What was it that breathed into the heart of HOWARD that spirit which so filled and fired his imagination with visions of human misery, and which brought from so many dungeons the plaintive cry, "Come over and help us!" that he could no longer rest in his own house, or in his own country, but travelled, again and again, across the breadth of Europe, in quest of wretchedness; descending into the captive's cell, that he might weigh his fetters, and measure his narrow apartment, and examine his food, to ascertain whether there was not more of misery in his hapless and forgotten lot, than justice demanded for the punishment of his crime; who inhaled the infected atmosphere of the lazaretto, to grapple with the plague—that fell destroyer of the human race, to approach which seemed to be courting death? It was Love that formed the character of that illustrious man, and presented him to the notice and admiration of the civilized world. What was it that gave courage, confidence, and self-denial, to that EXTRAORDINARY WOMAN, who ventured among the furies of Newgate, where, if she had not cause to fear that assassins would attempt her life, she must have calculated upon finding a sort of demons, whose malignity, excited by the purity and virtue which

seemed to set in stronger light, by the power of contrast, their own vices, would vent its rage on the angel form which had disturbed them? If ever the form and the beauty of charity were seen in one of our species, it was in Mrs. Fry when she entered the cells of our metropolitan prison, and called their vicious and loathsome inmates round her, to be instructed and reformed. And what is it that makes ten thousand holy men and women employ themselves continually in all kinds of self-denying exertions, to instruct the ignorant, to relieve the miserable, to reform the wicked? These, O heavenly Charity! are thy works, the displays of thy excellences, and proofs of thy pre-eminence!

3. It is a distinguished excellence of love, *that it is a likeness to God.* We are not at all surprised that the philosopher to whom the question was proposed, "What is God?" should have requested a day to prepare his answer; and when that was expired, should have asked a second, and a third, and should have at length confessed to the reproving monarch who proposed the query, that the more he examined the more he was confounded; and the farther he penetrated, the deeper and deeper he seemed plunging into darkness and mystery. Revelation has come to the aid of feeble reason, and, compared with the latter, has thrown a blaze of radiance on the all-important subject: and yet, with the light of truth shining around us, so little do we understand of God, that he may be said, as it respects us, to "make darkness his pavilion;" for "who by searching can find out God—who can find out the Almighty to perfection?" Of his essence we know nothing: of his eternity, omniscience, and omnipotence, next to nothing, as to any comprehension of them. His moral perfections are, it is true, more easily understood by us; but as these are all infinite, it is but little even of these that we can understand. "He is a rock, his way is perfect, without iniquity, just and right is he." Inflexible justice, immaculate purity, inviolable truth, unimpeachable fidelity, belong to him; but if this were all the view the Scriptures gave us of his attributes, if the delineation of the

divine character stopped here, how much would be wanting to the sinner's comfort? Can the trembling and condemned criminal take much pleasure in contemplating the power, the justice, and the truth of the judge, who holds his destiny in his hand,—at least till he knows whether that judge have *mercy* also in his heart, and in his prerogative? And as little would it comfort us to know all the other attributes of Deity, if we would not exultingly exclaim, in the language of the Apostle, "God is Love!" Sublime and heart-reviving declaration! never was anything uttered more calculated to delight the soul of man. Such a view of Deity is peculiar to revelation. Idolatry, in all her strange devices, in all her image-making processes, never conceived of such a God: power, wisdom, justice, truth, have all received their appropriate symbols of divinity, and have been worshipped under material forms, but benevolence had no statue, no temple, no priest. It was too pure a conception for the human heart, and too elevated an idea for human reason. "God is love!" This refers not, of course, to his essence, but to his character. It means, that benevolence is his whole moral character: not only that his nature is one sum of infinite excellence, but that his conduct is one mighty impulse to that which is good; in other words, that the divine disposition is an infinite propensity to delight in happiness, as already existing, or to produce it where it does not exist. But be it recollected, that the benevolence of God is the love of a governor or ruler, and not merely that of a philanthropist, or a father; and who, in the exercise of his good-will to any particular part, cannot sacrifice the welfare of the whole; and, consequently, whose benevolence is not only compatible with the exercise of retributive justice, but requires it.

Such is the disposition of that divine mind, to which, by Christian love, we are conformed: that benevolence of the Deity, which, in its propensity to delight in happiness, and to create it, makes him infinite in patience, to bear with the millions of crimes which daily insult and provoke him; infinite in mercy to pardon the most ag-

gravated transgressions; infinite in kindness to provide for the wants and comforts of his creatures. The highest pre-eminence in Christian love: the richest gem in its crown of honour, is its resemblance to God. There is nothing remotely analagous to faith, or hope, in the divine nature. He that is omniscient, cannot be said to believe; nor he that is infinitely blessed, and possessed of a divine fulness, be said to hope: but he can and does love. Resemblance to God is the highest glory of man. We should esteem it an honour to bear a faint impress of some of the more distinguished of the human race. It would be thought a high compliment, to have it said that our genius resembled that of Milton, and our benevolence that of Howard: that our faith was like Abraham's, or our meekness akin to that of Moses; but how much greater is the distinction to bear, by love, *the image of* GOD.

5. LOVE *is eternal in its duration;* it ascends with us to the skies, to live in our hearts, as the temper of our souls, for ever and ever. It is questioned by some, whether the other two graces will cease in the celestial state. It has been contended, that as the glories of the divine nature are illimitable and innumerable, and the glorified mind will not attain to a perfect knowledge of these at once, but be continually receiving fresh communications on this vast theme, there must be both faith and hope in heaven; for as we successively receive these, we must believe in the assurance of those which are to come, and must perpetually look forward with expectation and desire. But does not this assume what cannot be proved—that our knowledge of God and divine things will be communicated in heaven by testimony, and not be acquired by intuition? It is not at all necessary that our growing knowledge, our eternally accumulating ideas, should be thus conveyed to us; for they may for aught we know, be the reward of pleasant study, or they may flow into the mind, as the ideas of sensation do into the soul, without any effort, and may also come with all the certainty of that intuition by which we perceive the truth of axioms. To say that this is

belief, is to confound two things essentially distinct,—knowledge and faith. So that it does not appear plain, that faith, in any sense of the term, will exist in heaven. But though it could be proved that, in some modification of the term, it would be exercised in the celestial state, such a belief would differ so materially from that which we now possess, and by which we are justified and saved, that it may with propriety be said, faith will cease in heaven. All the great objects to which faith now refers are absent: we believe in their existence, through the report which is made of them in the word of God; but in heaven they will be immediately present to the senses of our glorified body, or the perceptive faculty of our spirit made perfect. Nor, as it respects hope, is it by any means certain that this will exist in the heavenly state; for although it is difficult to conceive how there can be otherwise than a futurity, even in eternity, and how there can be a state of mind otherwise than the desire and expectation of future good,—yet, as in hope there is usually some degree of doubt and uncertainty, the state of mind with which glorified spirits contemplate and anticipate future good, may be an indubitable certainty, which excludes the restlessness of desire, and the incertitude of expectation.

In the hour of death, the believer closes the conflict with his spiritual enemies, enters a world where no foe shall ever exist, and where, of course, he no longer needs either defensive or aggressive weapons. He takes off the helmet of salvation, for hope is not needed when he is brought to full possession: he lays aside the shield of faith, for seeing and knowing have succeeded to believing, and he will be beyond the fiery darts of the wicked one: the breastplate of sincerity he retains, not as a weapon, but as an ornament—not as a means of defence, but as a memorial of victory: his feet are no longer shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, for he will no more have to tread on the snares of the destroyer, nor be exposed to his missiles: the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, shall be sheathed, and hung with the trumpet in the hall: praying will cease,

where there is no want to be supplied—no care to be alleviated—no sin to be forgiven—no sorrow to be soothed: watchfulness will no more be necessary, where no enemy is found, no danger arises: the means of grace will all be useless, where grace is swallowed up in glory: submission will never be called for, where there are no trials: and even many of the properties of love itself will seem to be absorbed in its general principle; many of its modifications and operations will cease, amidst its eternal delight in perfect excellence and happiness: for there can be no forgiveness of injuries where none will be inflicted; no long suffering where there is nothing to suffer; no concealment of faults where none can be committed; no self-denial where there will be nothing to try us: nothing of love will remain, nothing be exercised, but a pure and unmixed delight in happiness: and how should it stimulate us to the exercise of mutual forbearance and commiseration now, to consider that it is the only state where these virtues can be indulged!

CHAPTER XVIII.

IMPROVEMENT.

ADOPTING the method pursued by the old Divines, I shall take up this part of the subject in the way of

INSTRUCTION.

1. May we not infer from it, *the divine origin of those Scriptures*, which give such a pre-eminence to the duty of love.

The contents of the word of God have ever been considered, and very justly, as a voucher for its divine authority. The Bible is its own witness: the sublimity of its doctrines, surpassing alike the invention and the comprehension of the human understanding; the harmony of its writers; the grandeur of its style, the more remarkable if we consider the illiterate character of many of those who wrote it; the elevation and purity of its morality, especially when contrasted with the condition of the whole world; the view it gives us of the nature and attributes of the Deity, of the character of Jesus Christ, of the state of human nature, of the scheme of redemption, of the elements of evangelical piety, of the certainty and glory of immortality;—are all the handwriting of Jehovah, and, together, form this illustrious inscription—"THE WORD OF GOD." Where is anything like this among the works of men? Could ignorance have devised a system so sublime, or depravity invent a scheme so holy? But to go no farther than the subject we are now considering, and which may be regarded as not only a single precept of mora-

lity, but the spirit of the whole, is it conceivable that such a generous and self-denying system of duty would have sprung from the selfishness of human nature? Would man, had he been left to the mere exercise of his reason, and the impulses of his own heart, ever have summed up all morality and social obligation in that one word, LOVE, and have represented this as the essence of virtue? Is there anything analogous to this in any human system with which we are acquainted?

Examine PAGANISM, both ancient and modern; and what of this spirit do you find in its multiform varieties? Was benevolence, as has been already asked, ever embodied in an idol? was a temple, a statue, or an altar, ever raised to its honour? The abstractions of wisdom and power, and some few of the sterner virtues of human nature, together with many of its sinful passions, obtained a niche in the Pantheon; but such a virtue as that enjoined by Paul, not only was not worshipped, but would have been despised, by all classes of ancient idolaters, as diametrically opposed to those qualities in which they considered human greatness to consist. To say nothing of that spirit of cruelty which, like a demon legion, possessed, and tortured, and convulsed, the worshippers of Moloch, even the milder and classic mythology of the Greeks and the Romans, breathed into its votaries no spirit of universal philanthropy. The patriotism of these nations, the chivalrous self-devotedness, which is blazoned with such splendour on the page of history, and which kindle such enthusiasm in the youthful imagination,—what is it but the light of a consuming fire? The patriotism of Rome, and of Greece, in their best and purest days, was but a selfishness of the most destructive kind, which would have trampled down pure philanthropy with indignant scorn, as a mean and cowardly spirit—a traitor against the absorbing glory of Athens or of the Roman commonwealth. Those proud and haughty patriots thought that the world was made for them, and cared not what rights of other nations they invaded, so as they could strengthen their own power; nor what misery they inflicted, so as

they could extend their own fame. Selfishness the most engrossing was the soul of their system: every man considered himself as represented by his country, and, in contending for the honour of the latter, was fighting for his own aggrandisement. Had love been the ascendant in those ages, the world would never have been made to lie prostrate at the feet of Alexander, or of Cæsar.

And who among the poets sang the praises of universal benevolence; who among the legislators made it the basis of their morals, who among the philosophers expatiated on its glories, or laid the obligation to cultivate it, upon the consciences of their disciples? The highest virtue of paganism was martial prowess. So heavenly a glory never shone upon it, as is contained in that one sentence, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" or if any theory, distantly analogous to it, was found there, it was a borrowed light, the dim reflection of the distant brightness of divine truth.

And as to *modern* paganism, we need not say how vain it is to seek for universal love amidst the ferocities of the American Indians, the murderous cruelties of the South Sea Islanders, the disgusting selfishness and ridiculous vanity of the Chinese, or the insulting and degrading oppressions of the Hindoos.

Next turn your attention to MOHAMMEDANISM; and in what page of the Koran will you find, we will not say, such a description, and such an enforcement, of philanthropy as we have in this chapter; but where do you find a recognition of the principle? In all those pretended revelations from heaven, of which Gabriel is said to have been the bearer, where is there such a description of Deity as this—"God is love!" or such a sentiment as that which arises out of it, "he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him!" So far from recognizing this principle, Islamism condemns and forbids it. It enjoins almsgiving, it is true, and gives it a high place amongst its virtues, but this is not the same as love, and may be often carried to a great extent without a particle of its nature. This system of im-

posture, abounding, as it does, with minute and ridiculous ceremonies, and a slavish regard to absurd ritual observances, enforces, by the authority of its founder, the most ferocious and bloodthirsty hatred of all who do not receive it in the exercise of implicit faith. Wars against all infidels are not only enjoined in many passages of the Koran, but are declared to be in a high degree meritorious in the sight of God. How completely Islamism has filled its votaries with the most ferocious bigotry and the most merciless intolerance, is known by universal testimony. They everywhere pour insulting contempt upon all who are not Mussulmans, and feel a savage delight in adding cruelty to insult. "The infidel dogs," is a common appellation applied to Christians. The spirit of the system is everywhere visible in the absolute despotism of the governments of those countries in which it prevails; where it is found, the arts and the sciences do not flourish, and liberty withers in its shade. The flaming scimeter of the Sultan is its patron and defence; it was propagated by the sword—it is supported by the bow-string, and it is essentially and unalterably cruel. Such is Islamism: a curse to the world, a mystery in the divine government, a dreadful obstacle to the spread of Christianity, and the reverse of all that is holy and beneficent in the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.

Infidelity, it is true, has attempted an imitation of this virtue, but infidels have had revelation to copy from; and even with this model before their eyes, have produced a caricature instead of a fac simile. The universal benevolence of this school is at war with the private affections and individual tenderness: that of Christianity, springs out of them, and is founded upon them. We contend, therefore, that this noble, and generous, and useful disposition is one of the peculiarities of revealed truth; and whence, but from heaven, could it have proceeded, and who but Jehovah either could or would have given it the authority of a law? Whoever will reflect for a moment, will be struck with the singularity of the fact, that the Bible resolves the whole of

practical religion into love to God, and the whole of morality into love to man. Is this, we ask again, the work of human invention; or does it look like the production of imposture! Would the selfishness of man have devised such a system; for where, among all his handy work, do we find any thing like it? O no!—It is part of the superscription of heaven—it is the impress of divinity—it is the seal of truth.

2. We learn, *that the spirit of true religion is not only unlike, but opposed to, the characters most admired by the people of the world.*

The character which the historian loves to delineate, on which he delights to exhaust the stores of his genius, and to lavish the richest colouring of his pencil; which he is most pleased to exhibit to the admiration of his readers; and in which, with an eager sympathy, those readers take as much delight as did the author, perusing it again and again, till the soul glows with enthusiasm;—is not the meek and virtuous prince, who is intent only on the arts of peace, and the internal welfare of his kingdom: no, but the ambitious hero, who fills the world with the fame of his victories, and by the aid of dauntless courage, consummate skill, and inordinate lust of dominion, goes on from conquering to conquer: this is the man for whom the admiration of posterity is claimed; whose crimes are lost sight of in the splendour of his genius, and whose cruelty is forgotten in the success with which it is followed. Thus it is, that under the power of a peculiar fascination, demons are worshipped in sight of the miseries they have inflicted, and within hearing of the groans they have extorted, merely on account of the vast genius they possess, and of their power to curse the children of men. But the New Testament lavishes no encomiums on such men, bestows no praise on their deeds, but treats them as the bitterest enemies of human happiness. The sword of conflict and the laurel of victory are not among the objects which it commends to our attention, but which it devotes to our detestation: the peacemaker is the charac-

ter on which it bestows all its praises, and invests with its richest honours.

If we descend from national affairs to the more confined range of social intercourse, we shall find the same perversion of judgment, the same misconception of true excellence, and the same misplaced admiration. What is the character which is usually most applauded in fashionable circles, and also by the generality of mankind, whether rich or poor? Is it not the high spirited individual who is quick to discern offence, and bold to resent it; who will allow no one with impunity to tread upon the skirt of his dignity, or his right; who is, perhaps, in some things, frank, generous, and affable, but under this exterior conceals a proud, independent spirit, which can brook neither a superior nor a rival, but is ever aspiring to distinction; who is courteous but ambitious; who would not willingly and intentionally give offence, but, having given it, would feel himself for ever disgraced by putting on the garment of humility, and asking forgiveness; who would give alms to the needy, but not precedence even to the deserving;—is not this the most admired of the world's favourites? Is not revenge dignified with the name of honour, and pride called spirit? In short, are not the qualities generally admired by men, of the active, irascible, and ambitious kind; and are not the meek, and gentle, and passive virtues, looked upon with disesteem, and treated with contempt? Is poverty of spirit, is humility, is self abasement, is the forgiveness of insults, is patience under provocation, admired, applauded, imitated! Is it to the character formed of these graces, that the silent homage of the heart, and the loud praises of the tongue, are paid? Quite the contrary. The men who would practise these things, must make up their minds to endure the world's scorn, and to be treated as poor tame-spirited creatures, who deserve all the contumely they receive, because of their forbearance in submitting to it: and yet this is the spirit of religion, for this is the temper of Jesus. When Jesus Christ came into the world, he found it full of the notion that human glory

consisted in ambition, pride, and resentment; the Jew and the Gentile participated in the sentiment, and hence he took particular pains to correct this notion, giving, in his sermon on the mount, a delineation of character the very opposite of this. Indeed, the design of that sermon was to rectify the mistakes then universally prevalent on the subject of character and of happiness, and to teach the world that his disciples were to be pre-eminently distinguished by humility, penitence, meekness, purity, peaceableness, forgiveness, thirsting after righteousness; these are the qualities of a true Christian; and every one who bears that character must sedulously cultivate its appropriate dispositions, and be willing to bear the ridicule to which they will expose him. He must never seek to conciliate the favour of the unconverted, by imitating *their* spirit, or disguising his own; but bear their scorn, and wait with patience for a world where humility and meekness will be honoured and rewarded, and *love*, their parent disposition, be crowned with glory.

3. This subject plainly shows us, *that religion is exceedingly* DIFFICULT.

It is a very common supposition, that it is an easy thing to be a Christian. And if to be a Christian were nothing more than going to a place of worship, indulging in pious emotions, subscribing to religious institutions, and professing certain religious opinions, the supposition would be correct; for nothing is more easy than all this: but if the spirit of religion be the disposition described in this chapter, then must it be obvious to every one who knows his own heart, that it is the most difficult thing in the world. The Scriptures everywhere represent true piety by terms, allusions, and figures, which imply the greatest effort and the most persevering labour: hence we are commanded to "*strive* to enter in at the strait gate;" to "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth most easily beset us; and to *run with patience* the race that is set before us;" to "*labour* for the meat which endureth unto eternal life;" to "*fight* the good fight of faith;" to "*mortify* the deeds

of the body;" to "crucify the flesh." What terms! what ideas! what metaphors! Can anything that is *easily* accomplished, require or justify the use of such language? If it were a light thing to be a Christian, could the sacred writers, with any propriety, have employed such strong and very expressive figures? Nothing, surely, can more impressively teach us the absolute and indispensable necessity of the most incessant as well as vigorous effort. The course of a sinner is down hill. "Easy," says VIRGIL, "is the descent to hell:" a transgressor has nothing to do but to give himself up to the indulgence of his corruptions, and he will slide, without effort, to perdition. Not so the saint. Heaven, by an appropriate figure of speech, is represented as on a high eminence, which cannot be reached without constant and laborious climbing. Not that all this is necessary to *merit* heaven, but to reach it: we are justified by faith without works, and become entitled to eternal life exclusively by the righteousness of Christ; nor are we to conceive of the faith by which we receive this righteousness as consisting of any violent strivings of our minds, but as a simple dependance on the Lord Jesus Christ for acceptance with God: but we are speaking of the Christian temper, of practical religion, of sanctification, of going on through all the trials and temptations of life, to the possession of that crown of glory which Christ has merited for us; and if this be easy work, there is nothing difficult.

4. *Religion is a comparatively* RARE *thing among men.*

This is, indeed, a melancholy and a painful reflection; for it is saying, in other words, there are but few that are saved. It is applying to our own times the awful language employed by our Lord as descriptive of the state of things, in his days upon earth. "Broad is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Tremendous and truly dreadful is the idea, that the greatest part of mankind are moving to-

wards the bottomless pit, and sinking daily in crowds to the miseries of perdition. Such a sentiment ought not to be admitted to the mind, except upon the clearest evidence; neither ought it to be uttered by the lip, much less be recorded by the pen, except with a view to lessen the havoc which it describes, by disturbing the delusion which is the cause of this extensive ruin.

It is evident—at least if the Word of God be true—that no man can be saved without religion; and that the religion which does not include love, is, in fact, no religion at all: the only inquiry, then, to be answered is, Does Christian love abound, or is it comparatively rare? Is the great mass of human beings around us actuated by a spirit of universal benevolence—a benevolence which is the fruit of regeneration, and the effect of faith; which springs from love to God, and is cherished by a sense of redeeming grace; which is exercised in obedience to the divine authority, and with a view to the divine glory; which, in its operations, is full of forbearance and meekness, kindness, candour, and sympathy, humility and disinterestedness? Is this the prevailing disposition of the bulk of mankind? Do we see it manifested in the intercourse of society? Alas! alas! instead of this, do we not still see these passions in operation, which the Apostle mentions as descriptive of the conduct of mankind to each other in his day. "For we ourselves, who were sometime disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy; hateful, and hating one another." Are not anger, malice, revenge, selfishness, envy, pride, censoriousness, the predominant dispositions in the generality of mankind? Who can deny this, or who will attempt to deny it? And if this be the case, religion must be comparatively rare. Few, indeed, are living in the exemplification of Christian love. Dreadful, tremendous idea!—I tremble as I write!—my soul is distressed, and groans with anguish over my own statements. I would disbelieve them if I could; and, even believing them, I would shut them up in my own bosom, if it were not necessary to promulgate

them, in order to detect that delusion which, by leading men to think that it is an uncommon thing for souls to be lost, makes it a still rarer occurrence for them to be saved. I must come to the conclusion—for I cannot help it, without becoming an infidel—that there are, in our time, many, many more who perish, than are saved. "Hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure; and their glory, and their pomp, and their multitude, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it." Reader, let the dreadful announcement, that it is a rare thing to be saved, startle you like thunder from your slumbers, and lead you to institute the most serious, and solemn, and impartial examination of your hearts. Do not rest satisfied with a mere vague idea of religion, or a mere general careless assumption that you are a Christian. Without such a disposition as that we have considered, you have no religion; and without religion you must perish eternally. You have been a *professor* of religion, and have approved a Gospel ministry, and have enjoyed the light and advantages of gospel ordinances; but this will only aggravate your guilt and condemnation, and misery: if you are not living under the influence of love, you are living without religion, and must have your doom with those of whom it is said "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

5. *We learn the great criminality of many things still remaining, and in some degree connived at, among professors of religion.*

National antipathies are too often found in considerable strength in the minds of Christians, especially in a time of warfare. Mistaking the nature of patriotism, and thinking, as did the ancient Greeks and Romans, that love for our country implies hatred of every rival nation, we are too apt to imbibe the spirit of the times and places in which we live, and to cherish a feeling of ill will towards our national competitors. The religion of the New Testament is by no means hostile to a spirit of pure and sublime patriotism; that patriotism which seeks to exalt a nation by all the arts of peace, the dis-

coveries of science, the inventions of fancy, the diffusion of knowledge, morality, and religion: but the thirst of conquest, the love of aggrandizement, the lust of domination, which would make us dislike a nation, because it limits our power and resists our aggressions, is an unchristian feeling, and an offence against the law of love. From every thing which would flatter the pride, or excite the ambition, or exasperate the anger, or increase the irritability, of a nation—every thing that would swell the current of prejudice against another country, we should carefully abstain: we should have no national enemies, no enmities and aversions excited, by the geographical divisions of the globe. We should remember that God hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the earth; and, therefore, that all men are our brothers, and should be *loved* as brothers. A Christian is, in one sense, a citizen of the world; and although he was born in England, should abhor the thought of an hereditary dislike to an American, or a Frenchman. When national passions are roused and incensed, he is to bear no part in the widely circulating hatred; and amidst much that he may regret and condemn, is still to remember, that he is not to be "easily provoked."

Allied to this is *the passion for war.*

Whether the abstract principle of the unjustifiableness of war in every case be tenable, we will not now discuss; but that war, as it is usually maintained, is utterly indefensible on Christian principles, can admit of no question. It is but too evident, that nominal, and even great numbers of real Christians, are not duly impressed with the deep criminality and great enormity of the warlike spirit. Instead of bearing their testimony, by all proper means, and on every suitable occasion, against it, they partake of the general and murderous enthusiasm; they cherish the same antipathies; are actuated by the same revengeful, proud, ambitious spirit, as the people of the world; defend by argument the wars that arise, as just and necessary; read with as much avidity the details of battles; boast with as much exultation of

the victories which are obtained; and enter as deeply into all the ardour of the hostile passion, as though they were the worshippers of Mars, the god of war, instead of Jehovah, the God of Love. Ought these things to be? Are they not a manifest and flagrant violation of all their principles and professions? The whole substance, genius, and tendency of Christianity, is pacific. The God whom we worship delighteth in mercy, and is infinitely benevolent; the character of Christ, who is our example, no less than our atonement, is formed of all the meek and gentle virtues, in the greatest perfection; the scheme of salvation is a plan of grace; all the doctrines of revelation unite in their tendency to soften and sweeten the temper; while the precepts of Christian morality forbid wrath, anger, malice, revenge of every kind or degree, and enjoin us, in no case, to render evil for evil, but ever to return good for evil. The New Testament is directly opposed to that rage and resentment, to which the world has given the delusive names of spirit and a sense of honour, and from whence wars and contentions proceed. To these haughty and mischievous sensibilities, which are but an imitation of the passions that rage in full force in the natures of brute animals, the religion of Jesus Christ offers all the resistance of a divine authority. Let any man think of the crimes committed, and the miseries inflicted, by a single battle, and surely, if he has ever read only one of the Gospels, or one of the Epistles, he must be convinced that a hatred of war is an essential feature of practical religion. But we need go no further than this chapter, to prove that the warlike passion, even in the least degree, is opposed to Christianity; for if love were universally prevalent, swords would be beaten into ploughshares, and spears into pruning-hooks. It is high time for the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, in every part of the world, to study the genius of their religion, since, in the knowledge of this, many of them are still lamentably deficient. It is a shame upon what is called the Christian world, that it has not long since, borne universal, impassioned, and indignant testimony against

that enormous evil, which still rages not merely among savages; but among scholars, philosophers, Christians, and divines. In vain, so far as regards the diffusion of a pacific spirit, has science enlightened the mind; in vain has learning softened the manners and cultivated the taste; in vain has art multiplied the comforts; in vain has even religion established the faith, and in some measure sanctified the minds of the inhabitants of Christendom; for war, horrid, bloody, destructive war, is as much practised, and as much patronised, as ever. Whatever men have learnt, they have not learnt to love one another; whatever attainments they have made in knowledge, they have made scarcely any in Charity; however high they may have soared above the savage into the heights of science, they are still nearly upon a level in a taste for war. But *real* Christians should come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing: let them act upon their own principles, and become not only the friends but the advocates of peace: let them echo back in their several spheres the angel's description of Christianity, "peace on earth, good will to men:" let ministers from the pulpit, writers from the press, private Christians, in their intercourse with each other and with the world,—inculcate a fixed and irreconcileable abhorrence of war: let the church of God be a society for the diffusion of the principles of universal peace.

Love forbids *the indulgence of sectarian prejudice,* God has, for wise ends no doubt, permitted the existence of various and conflicting opinions among real Christians: but, unhappily, instead of making these differences merely the occasion of mutual forbearance, and opportunities for showing through what interposing media Christians can press to recognize and embrace each other; instead of converting them into tests of the sincerity, and proofs of the strength of our attachment;—we have permitted them to rise up into separating walls, which divide and alienate our hearts from each other. Perhaps, even towards those whose errors are too fundamental to allow us to acknowledge them as fellow-

Christians, much less to hold communion with them in the bond of church fellowship, there is not enough of genuine charity; for is there not something of bitterness and contempt, of wrath and ill will, instead of that deep compassion and tender pity with which their situation should ever be viewed? Poor men! with all their boasted reason, they walk in darkness at noonday, and, with the lamp of truth in their hands, they are yet stumbling like the blind. We may feel a holy abhorrence of their sentiments, but, for themselves, we should cherish the deepest commiseration.

But as to those who agree with us in all the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, and differ from us only on the forms of church government, on the mode and subject of a sacrament, or on some of the minor points of doctrine,—surely—surely, towards them, we should maintain the full force of brotherly affection, without allowing our differences to interrupt for a moment the exercise of the most entire good will. We would indulge a hope, that, in this age, there is a nearer approximation than there was, of the various denominations of Christians to each other; that the spirit of intolerance is dying away; that there is a greater disposition to recognize each other, in the fullest sense of the term, as members of the same body, and brethren in the same family: but even yet, there is too much of the *odium theologicum* remaining among ministers, and too much of the spirit of party among laymen; too much of the feeling of rivalry and suspicion; too much disposition to miscontrue actions, to arraign motives; too much inclination to envy and jealousy. It is too common for the ministers and members of the establishment, to look with haughty contempt, and to speak as they feel towards those who secede from their church: and to revile them as troublesome schismatics, as rebels against established authority.

Let it not be thought, however, that it is only by Churchmen that the law of love is violated; for it must be confessed, and regretted, that it is not always observed as it should be, by the various sects of Dissenters.

Baptists Pædo-baptists, and Methodists, are all too often actuated by a degree of envy, jealousy, and selfishness, utterly unworthy of the great cause of religion, and altogether at variance with their common principles. What attempts are sometimes made by the Wesleyans to raise a prejudice against Calvanism and its adherents, by deformed, horrid, and ferocious looking caricatures of that system; and, on the other hand, how often are the whole body of Methodists condemned by Calvanists, as upholding all the errors of Pelagius! Baptists pour unmeasured contempt on infant baptism, and are repaid by their opponents in ridicule on adult immersion. Statements are often given of the sentiments of a sect, which they would deny, and consequences deduced from them which they would abhor. And then, what clashing of interests frequently takes place *when a new denomination is introduced into a town or a village.* Sometimes this introduction takes place without occasion for it: there is really no room for another body of Christians; the existing means of public instruction are already sufficient, both as to quantity and quality;—and, in this case, to be animated by such a zeal for *our* denomination, as to set it up at the certain hazard, and especially with the very hope, of dividing a prevailing and hitherto peaceful body of Christians, is, in the last degree, a hateful effusion of party spirit: men may call it zeal for the glory of God; but call it what they will, it is, when exhibited in its own deformity, nothing but envy, or the selfishness which seeketh its own. In other cases, what jealousy and ill will have been stirred up in the minds of an existing party, by an attempt made by another to establish itself in the same place! It signified nothing how large was the place, how great the population, how inadequate the means of religious instruction: all this was left out of view; and the new denomination, though they preached the Gospel in its purity, was opposed and disliked, because it came into a field where there was already an evangelical body, though that body could not be said to have occupied more than one little nook or corner of the uncultivated land. It

would be invidious to name any denomination as having manifested most of this spirit,—no one, perhaps, is altogether free from it: but we have known, in some instances, such wretched, paltry, nay wicked, means resorted to; such attempts to oppose the new comers, by defaming their principles, by insinuating charges against their ministers, by throwing suspicions even over the purposes of their private meetings; such a system of espionage, by sending spies to gather something to cavil at from the discourses of their opponents, as they choose to call them; such a series of kidnapping tricks to draw away the young and unwary;—that we have felt it somewhat difficult, in witnessing this absence of Christian love in others, to retain it in exercise in our own hearts towards them. Instead of indulging such envy, jealousy, and ill will, all denominations who agree in the fundamental truths of the Gospel should regard and hail each other, as only so many companies in the same regiment, or so many labourers in the same field, or so many workmen in the same building,—having one common object, and serving under one common head. But, alas! alas! no rival companies of a secular nature can be more jealous of each other than some congregations of professing Christians are. This remark does not apply so much to the larger bodies, which are to be found in our great towns and cities, as to the smaller ones, which exist in our less populous places. But we have all too much prejudice, and too little Christian affection for each other. We all need more of the mind of Christ. We do not wish to see a spirit of indifference to our distinctive opinions,—this would be a sin in the other extreme; but we desire to behold more cordial good will and confidence towards those who differ from us, and far, far less of the spirit of sects and parties.

Love would *soften the asperity, and remove the acrimony, of controversy.* We are not enemies to well-conducted controversy. As long as truth is attacked, it must be defended: and as long as error exists, it must be assailed. To give up the truth for the sake of peace, is a conspiracy against the Bible, and establishing a

covenant with the enemies of the Lord. Not an iota of God's word must be surrendered to error and infidelity. We must "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints;" and resist, if need be, unto bonds, imprisonment, and death. A hollow, fawning, parasitical spirit, which would conciliate the friendship of men disaffected to the Scriptures, by giving up, or treating lightly, any of their contents, has the curse of heaven upon it. "Controversy is the safety valve of theological zeal. The spirit of party is opposed to it, being too intolerant for discussion. Truth has always triumphed by means of controversy: she has grown powerless only when the sleep of lethargy has stolen upon the church. What is Christianity itself, but a standing controversy with the infidel, the sensualist, and the formalist,—the men of the world? We admit that the *spirit of controversy*, or, to speak more properly, the *controversial spirit*, is not, in itself, very conducive to the cultivation of personal piety. The angry controvertist, and fierce polemic, is not always a devout believer or an amiable member of society. The church has been sometimes as much disgraced by her advocates, as annoyed by her assailants; and there are intestine debates and disputes, which, as friends to religion, as well as friends to peace, we could wish to have terminated for ever. But alive, as we trust we are, to the dangers of controversy, we must, nevertheless, protest against that timid, trimming, self-indulgent, ultra-liberal dread of religious debate, which would bind over truth to keep the peace with error, and consign those celestial weapons of the spiritual armoury—reason and Scripture—to the ark of the church, as useless regalia."* It is highly probable that all controversy will never cease, till truth stands revealed amidst the light of eternity. But there will come a period, when men will discuss their differences in the spirit of brotherly affection: when, perhaps, there will be fewer points unsettled, and those few will be debated with candour and mutual esteem. Too

* Eclectic Review.

many, in their disputations about religion, contend for truth, till they have destroyed love, and even, in reference to the former, present it in so mutilated a form, as to deprive it of much of its own engaging beauty.

Luther's prayer should be presented by all—"From frivolous, fruitless controversies, good Lord deliver us!" It is well observed by an old writer, "That disputations in religion are sometimes necessary, but always dangerous; drawing the best spirits into the head from the heart, and either leaving it empty of all, or too full of fleshly zeal and passion, if extraordinary care be not taken still to supply and fill it anew with pious affection towards God, and love towards man." There is no case in which good men are more under the power of the deceitfulness of the heart, than when engaged in religious controversy; and when, under the idea that they are only "contending earnestly for the faith," they indulge in all kinds of unhallowed tempers, dip their pens in gall, deliberately write, as deliberately print, and no less deliberately justify, the bitterest sarcasms—the severest irony—the most railing accusations—the grossest personalities—the most uncharitable surmises: in short, when, as the controversy is about religion,—a circumstance which ought to produce a spirit directly the reverse,—there is no degree of abuse, reviling, and defamation, to which they do not have recourse. Such has been too often the tone of religious controversy, and by which it would seem as if the graces were mere heathen courtezans, in whose company a Christian should blush to be found; while the furies were so many personifications of holy zeal, whose assistance is to be solicited in the support of truth. Oh, what a handle has the spirit of angry controversy given to infidels against the whole system of revelation!—they have fought against Christianity with poisoned arrows, and the gall of furious polemics has supplied the venom in which they have dipped their sarcasms, ironies, and jests. It is high time that the Apostle's exhortation should be practically remembered,—"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking,

be put away from you, with all malice:" that all who contend for the faith, should remember Paul's advice to Timothy,—"The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth." The wrath of man, in no instance, worketh the righteousness of God. Let any one read this chapter, and say if it be possible to justify the spirit in which contentions for the truth are generally carried on. Let it not be pleaded that we are commanded to rebuke sharply, as if this furnished an apology for all uncharitableness: for duties cannot be in opposition to each other: and therefore even this must be performed in a manner that is compatible with meekness and love. Unfortunately, the spirit of acrimonious controversy is as popular as it is sinful: those pugnacious hierophants, by whom it is carried on, are generally the leaders of a party, which thinks itself happy in a representative, who with his shield can defend them, and with his tremendous sword can vanquish their enemies, and thus lead them on to victory and supremacy. It would be amusing, if it were not too serious a matter for entertainment, to hear how these persons exult in the exploits of their redoubtable Hercules; and to see how securely they repose under the protection of his terrible and far-resounding club. What deep disgrace is it upon the professors and teachers of the religion of the meek and lowly Saviour, to suppose that *his* doctrines and *his* precepts require the aid of human and unhallowed passions to give them effect!

We may next exhibit the criminality which attaches to the sin of schism, and deplore its prevalence. It will be necessary to explain here what I mean by schism. No term has been more employed or more abused than this; it has furnished to bigots of all parties a theme of angry declamation, and a subject of bitter accusation and reproach, against all who differ from them in opinion; upon whatever ground, or in whatever spirit, that difference is maintained. Papists charge this sin upon Pro-

testants; while the Church of England, in its turn, attempts to fasten the guilt of it upon all who secede from her communion. It is circulated with eagerness from one denomination to another, as a term of ignominy, and is continually calling into exercise some of the worst passions of human nature. Papal bulls, episcopal charges, clerical sermons, party-spirited journals, are continually harping upon it; and multitudes, who have no other means of blackening an opponent, think that they cannot more effectually succeed in rendering him both odious and guilty, than by calling him a schismatic. I will at once confess, that schism is, indeed, when properly understood, a sin of so enormous a kind, that too much cannot be said for its condemnation. But it is *not* properly understood. In its etymological signification it means a rent, a division, a separation of that which was originally one.*

Campbell's remarks are so clear and convincing on this subject, that they may, with great propriety, be referred to. As *breach*, or *rupture*, is the literal import of the term in our language, wherever these words may be figuratively applied, the term *schism* seems likewise capable of an application. It invariably supposes, that among those things whereof it is affirmed, there subsisted an union formerly, and as invariably denotes that the union subsists no longer. In this manner the Apostle Paul uses the word, applying it to a particular church, or Christian congregation. Thus he adjures the Corinthians, by the name of the Lord Jesus, that there be no divisions, or *schisms*, among them; and in another place of the same Epistle, "I hear that there are divisions," or schisms. In order to obtain a proper idea of what is meant by a breach, or schism, in this application, we must form a just notion of that which constituted the union whereof the schism was a violation. Now, the great and powerful cement which united the souls of Christians, was their mutual love. Their hearts in the emphatical language of holy writ, *were knit*

* Matthew ix. 16. John vii. 43.

together in love. This had been declared by their Master to be the distinguishing badge of their profession—"*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*" Their partaking of the same baptism, their professing the same faith, their enjoying the same promises, and their joining in the same religious services,—formed a connexion merely external, and of little significance, unless, agreeably to the Apostle's expression, it was rooted and grounded in love. As this, therefore, is the great criterion of the Christian character, and the foundation of Christian unity,—whatever alienates the affections of Christians from one another is manifestly subversive of both, and may, consequently, with the greatest truth and energy, be denominated *schism.* It is not so much what makes an outward distinction, or separation (though this also may, in a lower degree, be so denominated,) as what produces an alienation of the heart, which constitutes schism in the sense of the Apostle; for this strikes directly at the vitals of Christianity. Indeed, both the evil and the danger of the former,—that is, an external separation,—is principally to be estimated from its influence upon the latter,—that is, in producing an alienation of heart; for it is in the union of affection among Christians, that the spirit, the life, and the power, of religion are principally placed.

Wherever an alienation of heart takes place, and whatever be the occasion of it, whether there be an external separation or not, there is a schism. It may arise in the Church of England, and has, perhaps, arisen in the divisions characterized by the terms evangelical and anti-evangelical; not, indeed, that these terms are recognised, but the distinctions certainly exist of which they are the designations; or it may exist in the Church of Scotland, and does exist in a way similar to what occurs in the sister church in the south; it arose in the Church of Rome, that boasted seat of unity and infallibility, in the contest between the Jansenists and the Jesuits; or, it may arise,—as, alas! we know to our shame and distress it does too often arise,

—in our Independent churches: so that, without any *actual* and *visible* separation or secession, this dreadful evil may be in full and mischievous operation. On the contrary, there may be diversity of opinion in the same society, as in those Baptist churches that admit of mixed communion, without any schism; and, provided there be no alienation of heart, no interruption to mutual esteem and good-will, there may be even an external separation, without schism. This sin can have no existence except in those cases where the unity of the spirit is disturbed, and the bond of peace is severed. As long as sincere love remains, there is, in the full sense of the term, no schism. Consequently, whatever tends to alienate the hearts of Christians from each other, whatever tends to produce discord, whatever tends to stir up strife,—no matter who may be guilty of such conduct,—is the very essence of this hateful vice. If men will attempt to coerce the conscience, by legislating for others in such matters as those of religion, and interfere, by human *authority*, in affairs which should be transacted through the medium of the Bible, between God and the soul,—*they* must be answerable for those divisions which arise from the conscientious objections of persons who cannot submit to such enactments. If to separate peaceably from the Church of England be the sin of schism, how will the Church of England justify itself from the same charge brought against her by the Church of Rome? The schismatic is not he who peaceably secedes; but he who renders secession necessary, by setting up requirements with which the separatist cannot comply without violating his conscience. Not that I mean to say Episcopalians, or even the supporters of any established religion, whatever are schismatical, except where their conduct is such as is calculated to produce mutual disaffection; so neither, on the other hand, are dissenters justly chargeable with this sin, unless their conduct can be fairly proved to be founded on a factious spirit of ill will towards the religious establishment of the country. It is nothing to say that their dissent proceeds on

insufficient grounds, and their objections to the church, as by law established, are to things that are indifferent in themselves, and therefore frivolous and vexatious. If they are indifferent, why then impose them? but of their indifference or importance dissenters themselves must judge; as did the reformed churches of Christendom of the corruptions of Popery. If a dissenter employ himself in stirring up ill will towards the members of the Church of England, by arraigning the motives of its ministers, and charging them with sordid avarice, or a mere love of worldly pomp and domination; or by questioning the piety of its members; or by exciting animosity, or producing alienation of heart in the minds of his own party; or, if he so state, defend, and enforce his own principles, as that the natural result in those who hear him shall be an interruption of all communion of heart, and the exercise of all mutual goodwill between the two denominations; if he employ himself in widening the breach between them, and repelling them farther from each other;—he is indeed a schismatic, and deserves all the reproach which such conduct can bring upon him. But, then, it should be recollected that no *less* guilty of the sin of schism, is he who, whether he be a mitred or unmitred minister of the Established Church, employs his talents in holding up dissenters to public obloquy as a factious, troublesome, dangerous body, seceding upon no grounds but such as are frivolus, entitled to reproach for what they have done, and to suspicion for what they may do. But quitting names and parties, *schism* is the sin of doing anything to alienate men's hearts from each other, whatever be the occasion or the means of the estrangement. And a sin it is, of a magnitude and enormity which few can estimate. It is the very opposite of charity; and in saying this we arraign it upon the most solemn and the most capital charge, which any indictment can prefer. We have all, perhaps, something of it in our spirit; but little does it occur to some men, when they are advancing their charges and fulminating their anathemas against others for the sin of schism, that, while in the

eye of heaven the objects of their anger are innocent of the crime that is laid to their charge, they themselves are regarded by him, whose judgment is according to truth, as the greatest schismatics upon earth.

The temptation cannot be resisted, of introducing here a long,—but no one who has a taste for literary or moral beauty will deem it too long an extract from the writings of Mr. Hall.

"The Gallican church, no doubt, looked upon it as a signal triumph, when she prevailed on Louis the Fourteenth to repeal the Edict of Nantes, and to suppress the Protestant religion. But what was the consequence? Where shall we look after this period, for her Fenelons and her Pascals; where for the distinguished monuments of piety and learning, which were the glory of her better days? As for piety, she perceived she had no occasion for it, when there was no lustre of Christian holiness surrounding her; nor for learning, when she had no longer any opponents to confute, or any controversies to maintain. She felt herself at liberty to become as ignorant, as secular, as irreligious, as she pleased; and, amidst the silence and darkness she had created around her, she drew the curtains, and retired to rest. The accession of numbers she gained by suppressing her opponents, was like the small extension of length a body acquires by death; the feeble remains of life were extinguished, and she lay a putrid corpse—a public nuisance, filling the air with pestilential exhalations. Such, there is every reason to believe, would be the effect of similar measures in England. That union among Christians which it is so desirable to recover, must, we are persuaded, be the result of something more heavenly and divine than legal restraints or angry controversies. Unless an angel were to descend for that purpose, the spirit of division is a disease which will never be healed by troubling the waters. We must expect the cure from the increasing prevalence of religion, and from a copious communication of the Spirit to produce that event. A more extensive diffusion of piety, among all sects and parties,

will be the best and only preparation for a cordial union. Christians will then be disposed to appreciate their differences more equitably, to turn their chief attention to points on which they agree; and, in consequence of loving each other more, to make every concession consistent with a good conscience. Instead of wishing to vanquish others, every one will be desirous of being vanquished by the truth. An awful fear of God, and an exclusive desire of discovering his mind, will hold a torch before them in their inquiries, which will strangely illuminate the path in which they are to tread. In the room of being repelled by mutual antipathy, they will be insensibly drawn nearer to each other by the ties of mutual attachment. A larger measure of the spirit of Christ would prevent them from converting every incidental variation into an impassable boundary, or from condemning the most innocent and laudable usages, for fear of symbolizing with another class of Christians,—an odious spirit, with which the writer under consideration is strongly impregnated. The general prevalence of piety in different communities, would inspire that mutual respect, that heartfelt homage, for the virtues conspicuous in the character of their respective members, which would urge us to ask, with astonishment and regret, Why cannot we be one? what is it that obstructs our union? Instead of maintaining the barrier which separates us from each other, and employing ourselves in fortifying the frontiers of hostile communities, we should be anxiously devising the means of narrowing the grounds of dispute, by drawing the attention of all parties to those fundamental and catholic principles in which they concur.

"To this we may add, that a more perfect subjection to the authority of the great Head of the church, would restrain men from inventing new terms of communion, from lording it over conscience, or from exacting a scrupulous compliance with things which the word of God has left indifferent. That sense of imperfection we ought ever to cherish, would incline us to be looking up for superior light, and make us think it not im-

probable, that in the long night which has befallen us, we have all more or less mistaken our way, and have much to learn, and much to correct. The very idea of identifying a particular party with the church, would be exploded, the foolish clamour about schism hushed, and no one, however mean or inconsiderable, be expected to surrender his conscience to the claims of ecclesiastical dominion. The New Testament is surely not so obscure a book that were its contents to fall into the hands of a hundred serious impartial men, it would produce such opposite conclusions, as must necessarily issue, in their forming two or more separate communions. It is remarkable, indeed, that the chief points about which real Christians are divided, are points on which that volume is silent; mere human fabrications which the presumption of men has attached to the Christian system. A larger communication of the spirit of truth would insensibly lead Christians into a similar train of thinking; and, being more under the guidance of that infallible teacher, they would gradually tend to the same point, and settle in the same conclusions. Without such an influence as this, the coalescing into one community would probably be productive of much mischief; it certainly would do no sort of good, since it would be the mere result of intolerance and pride, acting upon indolence and fear.

"During the present disjointed state of things, then, nothing remains but for every one to whom the care of any part of the church of Christ is entrusted, to exert himself to the utmost in the promotion of vital religion, in cementing the friendship of the good, and repressing, with a firm and steady hand, the heats and eruptions of party spirit. He will find sufficient employment for his time and his talents, in inculcating the great truths of the Gospel, and endeavouring to "form Christ" in his hearers, without blowing the flames of contention, or widening that breach which is already the disgrace and calamity of the Christian name. Were our efforts uniformly to take this direction, there would be an *identity* in the impression made by religious instruction; the distortion of party features would gradually disappear, and

Christians would everywhere approach toward that ideal beauty spoken of by painters, which is combined of the finest lines and traits conspicuous in individual forms. Since they have all drank into the same spirit, it is manifest nothing is wanting, but a larger portion of that spirit, to lay the foundation of a solid, cordial union. It is to the immoderate attachment to secular interest, the love of power, and the want of reverence for truth,—not to the obscurities of revelation,—we must impute the unhappy contentions among Christians; maladies which nothing can correct, but deep and genuine piety. The true *schismatic* is not so properly the person who declines a compliance with what he judges to be wrong, though he may be mistaken in that judgment, as the man who, like the author before us, sedulously employs every artifice to alienate the affections of good men from each other." *

5. *How desirable is it that religion should prevail more than it does.*

If the spirit of *religion* is love, then who can avoid longing for its universal dominion? How much is it to be coveted for the PEACE OF OUR CHURCHES! It must be confessed, and that with grief and shame, that Zion is not yet a "peaceable habitation;" nor do all her assemblies present the good and the pleasant sight of brethren dwelling together in unity. Contentions about one thing or another abound. The seeds of discord are plentifully sown, and bear an exuberant crop of the fruits of contention. How many religious communities are distracted, to their own injury, the exultation of their enemies, and the discredit of religion! Many are the causes which produce this unhappy state of things; but that which gives force to them all, is the absence or the weakness of love. Here is the grand defect, and all other circumstances are but subsidiary. It is most melancholy and humiliating to discover, when some trifling disagreement occurs, what small attainments seemingly flourishing churches have made in this virtue; how insignificant is the subject over which two

* Strictures on a work entitled, "Zeal without Innovation."

parties will engage in all the eagerness of contention, and how bitter the spirit with which the contention is carried on. It has been said, that quarrels about religion have been usually maintained with more malevolence than any other. This we deny; but, at the same time, we must admit that they are often sustained with a measure of acrimony that is a disgrace to all concerned. The usual occasion of disagreement, is either the dismissal or the choice of a minister. And not unfrequently do believers wrangle about him who is to teach them religion, till they have lost the very spirit of piety itself. But whatever may be the occasion, want of love is the cause, of all feuds and strifes.

O! what churches we should have, if Christian charity were allowed to have its full scope! The *pastor* would labour with the most earnest, indefatigable, and disinterested zeal for the eternal welfare of the flock, and make it evident that compassion for souls, and not filthy lucre, was the impulse of all his conduct. Affection would beam in his eyes, and breathe in his spirit, while "the law of kindness" would dwell on his lips. He would preside over the people in the meekness of wisdom; and, instead of proudly lording it over God's heritage, he would rule them in love. He would be gentle among them, "even as a nurse cherisheth her children." Instead of being easily provoked by any little unintentional infringement on his rights, or disrespect to his dignity, he would forbear with that which was the result of ignorance, and wisely and meekly expostulate in reference to that which was the effect of impertinence. Over all his talents, however brilliant, he would put the garment of humility; and with respect to all his success, however great, he would speak in the language of modesty. He would neither envy his more gifted or successful brethren, nor proudly vaunt over his inferiors. To all his charge, even the most illiterate and obscure, he would conduct himself with the condescension of true benevolence, put the most favourable construction on the actions of his people, repose in them an honourable confidence, labour to correct their er-

rors, whether doctrinal or practical, and have no greater joy than to see them walking in the truth.

Christian charity would also dictate *to the people towards their minister*, a line of conduct no less pious and amiable: it would lead them to attach themselves decidedly and warmly to his person and ministry; to demonstrate, in every possible way, their sincere and cordial wish to promote his comfort; to abstain from everything that would grieve his mind; and, by every means in their power, to promote his usefulness. It would not allow them to be offended by his faithful rebukes, but cause them to submit, with Christian frankness and humility, to his cautions, admonitions, and reproofs: it would lead them to interpret, in a candid manner, any little neglects, or unintentional offences: it would make willing and reasonable excuses for his seeming inattention: it would cover, and not expose, his infirmities, if they are such as can comport with sterling piety: it would lead them to manifest a becoming respect for his office, and opinion:—and whilst it would leave them in full possession of entire freedom of thought, and manly dignity of conduct, would still prescribe humility and reverence, which the Scriptures claim for those who are set over them in the Lord.

In the conduct of *the people towards each other*, love would check all that irritability which is excited by a word,—that anger which is cherished till it ripens into malice or revenge. How much is the peace of our churches disturbed by such hot or sullen spirits! But did this heavenly virtue prevail, care would be taken not to give offence; and equal care would be in exercise not to take offence: one man would bridle his tongue, lest he should utter words that would grieve; another would rein in his temper, lest he should be provoked when he ought not; and all would be watchful against whatever would destroy the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace. If any action has been done, or any word spoken of a doubtful kind, no one would suspect an evil motive, but rather be ready to conclude in favour of a good intention: suspicion would be displaced by mu-

tual confidence, and hasty imputations of what is wrong, by the belief or hope of what is right. Instead of circulating ill reports of each other, or believing them when circulated, all would entertain too much goodwill, and too high an opinion of their brethren, to listen to an insinuation against them. Universal kindness would reign throughout the society; each would feel an interest in the whole, and, by "whatsoever things are lovely," would promote their comfort and bear their burdens. There would be no struggle for pre-eminence, no grasping at power: such pride would be abhorred, and all would be subject one to another: the rich would not be puffed up, nor vaunt themselves against the poor, nor would the poor envy the rich. In a time of difficulty, such as the choice of a minister, there would be a giving up, as far as possible, of individual feeling, and all would consider the general good: no one would selfishly wish to have *his* taste alone consulted, his opinion alone attended to; no one would obtrude his views upon the rest in an unseemly manner: but each would consult all.

We may again remark, what churches we should have, if love were the ruling principle which governed them. "Then would each of them present a peaceful haven, inviting men to retire from the tossings and perils of this unquiet ocean to a sacred enclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms and tempests of the world were not permitted to invade:" then would the prayer of Christ be answered, and his people be one, and afford by their unity a demonstration of the divinity of his mission, which the most impious could not resist: then would the church on earth present a calm unruffled surface, which should reflect, as from a mirror, a bright resemblance of the church in heaven. Let us, then, for the honour of our principles, for the credit of our common Christianity, for our own peace and comfort in relation to the body of the people,—seek that more of this heavenly spirit may be diffused among all who are called by the name of Christ.

How desirable is it that such a religion as

THIS SHOULD BE SPREAD OVER THE FACE OF THE WHOLE EARTH! In what a miserable condition is our globe. The whole world lieth in the wicked one, is entangled in the coils, and bitten by the fangs, and tortured by the venom, of the old serpent,—the devil. Justly has the Apostle said, that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Nearly eighteen centuries have passed since he saw this bleeding victim of Satan's cruelty, and heard its groans; and it is bleeding and groaning still. Wherever we go, either in reality or in imagination, we find ourselves in a vale of tears, where forms of misery, indefinitely varied and almost innumerably multiplied, rise before our eyes, and utter nothing but wo, wo, wo; and who can wonder that our world should thus be little else but a region of misery? Think upon the passions which predominate in human affairs; think of the vile affections, which, like furies, tyrannize over the minds of men: wrath, malice, revenge, envy, pride, suspicions, selfishness, cruelty, slander,—these are the oligarchy of diabolical tempers, which usurp the dominion of the world in the name of Satan, and which, with something of his power and of his fury, torment the miserable children of men. How much of the most cruel slavery, the most sanguinary warfare, the most remorseless oppression, the most deadly revenge, the most operative mischief, the most crafty subtilty, the most insulting pride,—is perpetually at work in the destruction of human happiness. The prevalence of love would put a stop to all this: it would beat the sword of war into the ploughshare of peace: it would break the galling fetter of slavery, and bid the captive go free: it would change the tyrant into a father: it would convert the venom of malice into the milk of human kindness: it would transform the crafty serpent into the innocent dove: it would tame the ferocity of the implacable assassin into clemency; and would teach *him* to pronounce forgiveness, who now breathes out nothing but slaughter: it would teach pride to put on humility as a garment: it would give to the vigilant eye of intelligence the expression of candour,

instead of the glance of suspicion; and would substitute, for the torment of envy, the exquisite delight of that sympathy which can rejoice with those that do rejoice.

WHAT AN ARGUMENT FOR CHRISTIAN MISSIONS! AND WHAT A MOTIVE TO THEIR ZEALOUS SUPPORT!!

We have already proved that both Paganism and Mahometanism are hostile to a spirit of universal benevolence: if, therefore, the world is ever to be subjugated to the mild and beneficial dominion of charity, the conquest must be made by Christianity. And to this honour is Christianity destined: it was to this theme that the evangelical prophet struck his lyre, when he said—"Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more: but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid." "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots; and righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Such is the poetic and beautiful description which is given by the prophet of the harmonizing and benevolent tendency of the Gospel, as well as of its effect wherever its influence is entirely submitted to. How exceedingly is it to be desired, that such a system should be universally prevalent! The awful description which the Apostle gives us of the idolatry of his times,

and of its demoralizing effects,—deeply as it is coloured, and darkly as it is shaded,—is not less justly applicable to the Pagan nations of the present day, than it was to those of antiquity. "They have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;—being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness: full of envy, debate, murder, deceit, malignity: whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." What a picture!! Who can contemplate it without horror! Yet such is the state of society—such the aspect of the moral world—such are the crimes that deform, and pollute, and torment, the human race under the reign of Paganism, which, wherever it exists, converts earth into the vestibule of hell, a den of wild beasts, a range of malignant demons,—which educates men for fiends amidst the worst of excesses of depravity, and tortures its victims in this world preparatory to their execution in the next. Who that pretends to carry in his bosom the heart of a man,—much more who that professes to have the spirit of a Christian, which is the mind of Christ,—but must mourn in bitterness of soul over this frightful wilderness, and long to bring these habitations of cruelty under the reign of love?

Let it be recollected, that whenever the religion of Jesus Christ is felt in its proper influence; whenever it changes the heart, and sanctifies the life;—it does not merely turn men away from dumb idols, but causes them also to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world. It does not merely lead to a change of names, a

substitution of one set of religious rites for another; but while it removes all that is impious in idolatry, it displaces all that is odious and abominable in vice. It presents the first table of the law, and says, "Thou shall love God with all thy soul;" and then holds up the second, and commands us to love our neighbours as ourselves. Wherever the Gospel of Christ is permitted to govern society, it banishes all that can afflict, and introduces whatever can comfort, the human race. All the crimes and the curses of society flee before it, while all the blessings of earth follow in its train: it not only brings learning, and arts, and sciences, with all that can adorn the mind and embellish life, but, as its chief benefit, it establishes the reign of charity. This it has done to a considerable extent in many places already; and even its enemies have acknowledged it. And he that would see what religion can do, has done, and will yet do, in exalting benevolence on the ruins of cruelty, and in establishing the reign of mercy,—let him contemplate, as he may do, through the medium of missionary reports, the once wild and savage Esquimaux, converted into peaceful, harmless, and benevolent followers of the meek and lowly Jesus; or the once murderous Otaheitans, who revelled in the blood of human sacrifices, and slaughtered without remorse their own children, now exhibiting a character remarkable for its clemency and gentleness; or the once marauding tribes of South Africa, casting away their poisoned arrows, and their assagays, and exhibiting a moral transformation as great and striking, as if the lions, that prowled around their tents, were changed by miracles into lambs. And are these the triumphs of that religion, of which the many branches, and the multiplied duties, are summed up in that one word—Love?

Friends of humanity! by all the love you bear to God or man, I conjure you to labour to the uttermost in extending the religion you profess. Estimate, if you can, the deep guilt of neglecting the cause of Christian missions. None of you have done what you could have done, or what you ought to do, in this most sacred, most

important cause. I ask, what proportion of your property ought to be put in requisition for promoting the universal reign of charity? Is a tenth, or a fifth, or a third, enough for that cause, the object of which is to teach all men that dwell on the earth to love God supremely, and each other as themselves?—enough to be given for the purpose of cementing the whole human family together in a union of affection?—enough to give to a cause, which, when it is completely victorious,—and completely victorious it will be,—will banish pride, and malice, and envy, and revenge, from the abodes of man? How can you live in splendour—how can you enjoy your luxuries—how can you dwell with delight upon your accumulating hoards of wealth,—while all this is wanting to extend the influence of religion?—Alas! alas! because you have so little of it in your own soul. Christian benevolence, were it felt in its full force, would lead to self-denial, to economy, to simple habits, to personal sacrifices,—in order that you may have more to spare for the great object of Christian missions.

But in addition to your property, and your influence, give to the cause of missions your private, sincere, fervent, believing, and constant prayers. It is only by the power of the Divine, Omnipotent Spirit, that the kingdom of Christ can be established in this selfish world. Read the chapter which we have considered,—compare with it the present state of mankind,—and then say if aught but the same power which called the chaos out of nothing, and raised this fair and beautiful world out of chaos, can effect a transformation so astonishing and sublime as would be affected, if this region of dark and vengeful passions were converted into an abode of holy, and mild, and benevolent affections. Beseech Jehovah daily, that *he* would arise and plead his own cause; for surely love must be eminently the cause of him who is infinite in goodness, and delighteth in mercy. Give him no rest till, in answer to believing and earnest prayer, he shall say, "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in

that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.—And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and whilst they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

CHAPTER XIX.

IMPROVEMENT, BY WAY OF EXAMINATION AND HUMILIATION.

SELF-EXAMINATION is the duty of every Christian, not merely that he may ascertain whether his faith be genuine, but whether it be sufficiently operative. It ought not to be a frequent and undecided question with any one,—"Am I in reality a child of God?" but it should be a constantly recurring inquiry, "Is there any one branch of religious obligation, which, through the deceitfulness of the human heart, I do not feel? or, through a criminal heedlessness, I habitually neglect?" The object of self-examination, with a believer, is to supply those defects in his graces, and to put away those remains of his corruptions, which, though they may not prove that he has no piety, prove that he has less than he ought to have. For this purpose, he should often bring his actions and his motives to the standard, and try his whole profession; as well what he does that he should not do, as what he does not that he should do. If we are to exhort one another daily, lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, we surely ought to examine ourselves daily, for the same reason. Our guilty self-love is perpetually attempting to throw a veil over the sinful infirmities of our nature—to hide their criminality from our view; and thus to keep us in

a state of false peace, by keeping us in ignorance. Against this deceitfulness of our heart, we can only be guarded by a frequent and close examination of our whole selves.

A frequent examination of our hearts and conduct is necessary, because of the multitude of our daily sins, which are often so minute as to escape the observation of a careless and superficial glance, and so numerous as to be forgotten from one day to another; and so, they either come not into notice, or pass out of recollection: and therefore they should be summed up every evening, and repented of, and forgiven, before we compose ourselves to sleep,—that nightly returning harbinger, and monitor, and image, of approaching death. The advantages of frequent examination are so many and so great, as to recommend the practice strongly to all who are deeply anxious about the welfare of their souls; by this means we shall not only detect many sins which would otherwise be lost in our attention to greater ones, but we shall more easily destroy them, and more speedily revive our languishing graces; just as a wound may with greater facility be cured while it is yet fresh and bleeding, and an extinguished taper, while yet it retains a strong sympathy for light, may be rekindled, either by the near contact of a neighbouring flame, or by the timely application of a little well directed breath. "Sins are apt to cluster and combine, when either we are in love with small sins, or when they proceed, from a careless and incurious spirit, into frequency and continuance; but we may easily keep them asunder by our daily prayers, and our nightly examinations, and our severe sentences: "for he that despiseth little things," said the son of Sirach, "shall perish by little and little." A frequent examination of our actions will tend to keep the conscience clear, so that the least fresh spot will be more easily seen; and so tender, that the least new pressure will be felt; for that which comes upon an already blotted page is scarcely discerned, and that which is added to an already great accumulation is hardly seen or felt. This, also, is the best way to

make our repentance pungent and particular. But on this subject we shall have more to say presently. If self-examination be neglected for want of opportunity, it is plain that those, at least, who have their time at their own command and disposal are far too deeply involved in the business of the world and the labyrinths of care: no man ought to allow himself to be so taken up in looking into his secular pursuits, as to have no time to look into the state of his soul; and to be so greedy after gain, or so intent upon the objects of an earthly ambition, as to be careless about examining whether we are growing in grace, and increasing in the riches of faith and love, discovers a mind which either has no religion at all, or has reason to fear that it has none.

But besides that cursory retrospect which we should take every evening of the conduct of the day, a portion of time should be frequently set apart for the purpose of instituting a more minute and rigid inquiry into the state of our personal piety; when, taking in our hand the Word of God, we should descend with this candle of the Lord into the dark and deep recesses of the heart, enter every secret chamber, and pry into every corner to ascertain if anything be hiding itself there which is contrary to the mind and will of God. Many standards will be found in the Scriptures, all concurring with each other in general purpose and principles, by which this investigation of our spirits should be conducted. We now propose the law of love.

On these occasions of introspection, we should inquire how far our faith is working by love. I will conceive of a professing Christian who has set apart a portion of time,—say on a Saturday evening, before he is to eat on the next day the Lord's supper; or on a Sabbath evening, when he has received the sacramental memorials of the Saviour's love, to examine into the state, not only of his conduct, but the frame and temper of his spirit. He is anxious to know how far he is living so as to please God. We can imagine him, after having read the Scriptures, presenting his fervent sup-

plications to God, in the language of the Psalmist, and saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." He now enters upon the business of self-examination; and the subject of inquiry that evening is the frame of his heart towards his fellow creatures, the state of his mind in reference to the law of love, the measure of his charity, and the infirmities of his temper. Hear his holy colloquies with himself. "I have no just reason, thanks be to sovereign grace! to question whether I have received the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel. I believe my creed is sound; nor have I any serious ground for suspecting the sincerity of my faith, or the reality of my conversion: my conduct, too, so far as the estimate of man goes, has, through the help of God, been free from immorality. And though I may without presumption say that I love God, yet I am covered with confusion that my love is so weak and lukewarm. But my solemn business at this time is, to examine into the state and measure of my Christian charity; for I am persuaded that whatever knowledge, or faith, or seeming raptures, or supposed communion with God, I may lay claim to,—I am but a very imperfect Christian, if I am considerably deficient in love. Taking the apostolic description of this lovely virtue, I will bring my heart to the test.

"Do I then *love*, in his sense of the word? Is my heart a partaker of this disposition? Is the selfishness of my corrupt nature subdued, and made to give way to a spirit of universal benevolence; so that I can truly say I rejoice in happiness, and am conscious of a continual benevolent sympathy with universal being, and of a perpetual efflux of good-will to all creatures? Do I feel as if my own happiness were receiving constant accessions from the happiness of others; and that my soul, instead of living in her own little world within, an alien from the commonwealth of mankind, indifferent to all but herself, is in union and communion with my species? In short, do I know the meaning of the

Apostle's emphatic expression, 'He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him?' But let me descend to particulars.

"What do I know of the *forbearance* of love? Can I suffer long, or am I easily provoked? Am I patient under provocation; restraining my anger; keeping my wrath in subjection under the most provoking insults, amidst the basest ingratitude, or the most irritating scorn? In my intercourse with my brethren in Christ, am I quick to take offence by any real or supposed slight or impertinence? Am I so jealous of my own dignity, so sensitive, and irritable, as to be roused to anger by any little offence, and transported to wrath by more serious provocations? Am I revengeful under injuries; brooding over them in silence, cherishing the remembrance, and reviving the recollection of them, waiting for an opportunity to retaliate, and rejoicing in the sufferings which come upon those that injure me? or am I easily conciliated, most forward to forgive, and ever ready to return good for evil? How have I acted since my last season of self-examination in these particulars? Let me call to recollection my conduct, that I may see how far I have practised the duty, and exhibited the excellence of Christian meekness.

"Charity is *kind*. Is kindness—universal, constant, operative kindness—characteristic of my conduct? Is the law of kindness on my lips, its smile upon my countenance, and its activity in my life? or am I uncivil and uncourteous in speech, frowning and repulsive in my aspect, grudging and unfrequent in acts of generosity? Have I the character, among my neighbours and acquaintance, of a man who can be always depended upon for a favour, when it is needed? or, on the contrary, am I by general report, a very unlikely person to lend a helping hand to a person in necessity? Are there any instances of unkindness which I can now call to remembrance, which have brought dishonour upon my reputation, guilt upon my conscience, reproach upon the cause of religion, and for which, therefore, I ought to seek the pardon of God through Christ!

" Charity *envieth not.* Am I subject to the tormenting influence of that truly diabolical temper by which a person is made miserable in himself, and to hate his neighbour or rival, on account of that neighbour's or rival's distinctions? Am I so truly infernal in my dispositions, as to sicken and pine at the sight of the success or happiness of others, and to cherish ill will on that account towards them? When I hear another praised and commended, do I feel a burning of heart within, and an inclination to detract from their fame, and to lower them in the estimation of those who applaud them; and do I secretly rejoice when anything occurs to lessen and lower them in public opinion, or to strip them of those distinctions which render them the objects of our dislike? or do I possess that true spirit of love, which constrains me to rejoice with those that rejoice, to feel pleased with their prosperity, and to consider their happinesss as an accession to my own? Have I, indeed, that benevolence which delights so truly in felicity, as to make me glad at seeing it in the possession of an enemy or a rival?

" Charity *vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.* Is this descriptive of *my* spirit, in reference to my own attainments and achievements? Am I lowly in my own eyes, clothed with humility, modest in the estimate I form of myself, and all that belongs to me? or am I proud, vain, and ostentatious; valuing and admiring myself on the ground of any personal, civil, ecclesiastical, or spiritual distinctions. Am I fond of exciting admiration, and obtaining applause? or am I content with the approbation of my own conscience, and the smile of God? Do I wish to make others feel their inferiority, and to suffer under a mortifying sense of it? or do I, from the most tender regard to their comfort, conceal, as much as possible, any superiority I may have over them; and make them easy and happy in my company? Do I indulge in haughty airs, or maintain a kind affability and an amiable condescension?

" Charity *doth not behave itself unseemly.* Is it my study not to give uneasiness and offence, by anything

unsuitable to my age, sex, rank, station and circumstances; anything rude, rough, impertinent, or unbecoming? or am I continually disturbing the comfort of those around me, by indecorous and unsuitable behaviour?

"Charity *seeketh not her own.* Am I habitually selfish,—anxious only for my own gratification, and building up my comfort to the annoyance or neglect of others? Am I indulging a penurious, avaricious disposition,—feasting upon luxuries, and refusing to minister to the relief of human misery, according to the proportion in which God has blessed me? or am I diffusing abroad my substance, considering that I am only a steward of what I hold, and must account for it all? Am I overbearing and intolerant in discussion and debate,—wanting others to sacrifice their views, in order that I may have every thing my own way? or am I willing to concede and yield, and disposed to give up my own will to the general opinion, and for the general good?

"Charity *thinketh no evil.* Am I suspicious, and apt to impute bad motives to men's conduct? or am I generous and confiding—prone to think the best that truth will allow? Am I censorious, or candid? Do I feel more in haste to condemn, than to excuse, and more eager to blame than to exculpate?

"Charity *rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.* What is my disposition toward those who are my opponents? do I delight in, or mourn over, their faults? Do I so love them, as to be glad when, by their regard to truth and righteousness, they raise themselves in public esteem; and to be sorry when they injure their own cause, and give me an advantage over them by their errors and sins? Have I made that high attainment in virtue and piety, which leads me to delight in the righteousness of a rival, even when it may seem to exalt him? or am I still so destitute of love, as to say, in reference to his faults, 'Ah! so would I have it?'

"Charity *covereth all things.* Am I prone and anxious to conceal the failings of others, or to expose them? 'Believeth all things.' Am I credulous of whatever is

to the advantage of a brother? 'Hopeth all things.' Where the evidence is not enough to warrant belief, do I indulge an expectation and desire that farther knowledge may explain the matter favourably?

"Charity *endureth all things.* Am I willing to make any exertion, to bear any hardship, to sustain any reasonable loss, for the peace and welfare of others? or am I so fond of ease, so indolent, so selfish, as to give nothing but mere ineffectual wishes for their comfort and well being?

"What measure of holy love have I,—of that love which puts forth its energies in such operations as these? Do I so love God, and feel such a sense of his love to me, as to have my soul transformed into this divine temper? Does the love of Christ thus constrain me? Am I so absorbed in the contemplation of that stupendous display of divine benevolence, that unparalleled manifestation of infinite mercy, which was made in the cross of the Son of God, as to find the selfishness of my nature melted, and all its enmities subdued, by this most amazing and transporting scene? I feel, that without love, I cannot have entered into the meaning and design, the moral force and beauty of the great atonement; that I can have no disposition which properly corresponds to that august and interesting spectacle. I see that knowledge is not enough, that belief is not enough, that ecstacy is not enough, that hope is not enough; that, in fact nothing can come up to the demands, to the spirit, to the design, of a religion which has the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ for its central object, and grand support, and distinguishing glory,—but a temper of universal and practical benevolence. Have I this? If so, How much of it?"

Such should be the subject of diligent and frequent examination to every professing Christian.

HUMILIATION should follow examination.

The act of humbling and abasing ourselves before God, is a part of the duty—not only of sinners, when they make their first application to the mercy seat for

pardon—but of believers, through every successive stage of their Christian career. As long as we are the subjects of sin, we ought also to be the subjects of contrition. We may, through sovereign grace, have been justified by faith, and have been brought into a state of peace with God; but this does not render a very humbling sense and confession of our sins an exercise inappropriate to our state, any more than it is inconsistent with the relationship of a child to humble himself before his father, for those defects in his obedience, which, though they do not set aside his sonship, are unworthy of it. "If we say we have no sin," says the Apostle, "we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." This language applies to believers, and not merely to unconverted sinners; and so does that which follows—"If we *confess* our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The most perfect assurance of hope does not release us from the duty of abasing ourselves before God; and if an angel were sent to assure us that we are in a state of acceptance with heaven, we should still lie under obligation to cultivate a contrite and penitential frame of mind. Sin, and not merely punishment, is the ground of humiliation. It is the most detestable selfishness to imagine, that, because we are freed from the penal consequences of sin, we are under no obligation to lie low in the dust. With what unutterable disgust we should look upon the individual who, because his life had been spared by royal clemency, when it might have been taken by national justice, acted, after his pardon, as if that very pardon had entitled him to forget his crime, and to live as carelessly and as confidently as he would have done had he never sinned. A pardoned sinner—and no believer is anything more—should ever be a humble and self-abased creature in the sight of God.

The subject we are now upon shows us what cause there is for humiliation before God. This frame of mind should not be founded upon, or produced, by mere *general* views of our depraved nature, but by par-

ticular apprehensions in reference to sinful practice; as long as our confessions are confined to mere acknowledgements of a depraved nature, our convictions of sin are not likely to be very deep, nor our sorrow for it very pungent. Such confessions will usually sink into mere formal and sorrowless acknowledgements of transgressions. It is by descending to details; it is the lively view and deep conviction of specific acts of transgressions, or defects in virtue;—that awakens and sharpens the conscience, and brings the soul to feel that godly sorrow which worketh repentance. One distinctly ascertained defect or transgression—especially if it be much dwelt upon in its extent, and influence, and aggravations—will do more to humble the soul, than hours spent in mere general confessions of a depraved nature.

There are many things, on the ground of which no self-abasement can be felt by the Christian who is walking in any degree of religious consistency. He cannot confess that which he has really not been guilty of: he cannot be humbled on account of any act of open immorality, for he has committed none. In reference to actual vice, he is to be thankful, not humble: he is to be humble, indeed, that he has a nature capable of it, if left of God; but he is to be thankful that he has not been permitted thus to disgrace himself. It is sometimes to be regretted that good people, in their public confessions of sin, are not more definite than they are, and that they do not express the particular sins for which they seek forgiveness of God. Without using language that seems applicable to adultery, and robbery, and drunkenness, our defects in all Christian graces are so numerous and so great, that there is no degree of humiliation which is too deep for those defects and omissions of which the holiest man is guilty before God. And we have no need to go beyond the subject of this treatise, to find how exceedingly sinful and vile we must all be in the sight of God. Let us only call to remembrance the truly sublime description which the Apostle has given us of the divine nature, and to which,

of necessity, we have so often referred,—" God is love," —infinite, pure, and operative love; let us only recollect his wonderful patience, his diffusive kindness, his astonishing mercy even to his enemies;—and then consider that it is our duty to be like him—to have a disposition which, in pure, patient, and operative benevolence, ought to resemble his; that this was once our nature, and will be again, if we reach the celestial state: and surely in such a recollection, we shall find a convincing proof of our present exceeding sinfulness.

Let it not be replied, that this is subjecting us to too severe a test. By what test can we try our hearts, but the law of God? What a proof is it of sin, when we find that the instances in which we have committed it are so numerous, that we want to get rid of the law by which it is proved and detected? Oh! what a fallen nature is ours, and how low has it sunk! We are not now examining it in its worst state, as it is seen among Pagans and savages, or even the best of the heathen; nor as it is seen in the worst parts of Christendom; nor as it appears in the best of the unrenewed portions of mankind;—no; but as it is exhibited in the Church of Christ, in the enlightened and sanctified portions of the family of man.

Must we not, after this survey, exclaim with the Psalmist—" Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults!" Who can carry in his bosom a proud heart, or on his brow a lofty mien? Who can look with complacency upon his poor starveling graces, and doat with fond and pharisaic eyes upon his own righteousness? Who is not stripped at once, in his own view, of all his imperfect virtues; and presented to his own contemplation in the naked deformity of a poor, sinful, and imperfect creature, who has no ground for pride, but most ample and abundant cause for the deepest humiliation? Let the men who value themselves so highly on the ground of their moral dignity, and who are regarded by others as almost sinless characters, and who feel as if they had little or no occasion for the exercise of a penitential frame of mind; who

pity as fanaticism, or scorn as hypocrisy, those lowly confessions which Christians make at the footstool of the divine throne;—let *them* come to this ordeal and try themselves by this standard, that they may learn how ill grounded is their pride, and how little occasion they have to boast of their virtue! Would they like that any human eye should be able to trace all the movements of their hearts, and see all the workings of envy, and suspicion, and wrath, and selfishness, which the eye of *Deity* so often sees there? Say not that these are only the infirmities of our nature, to which the wisest and the best of the human race are ever subject in this world of imperfection; because this is confessing how deeply depraved is mankind, even in their best state. Can envy, and pride, and selfishness, and suspicion, and revenge, be looked upon as mere piccadilloes, which call for neither humiliation nor grief? Are they not the germs of all those crimes which have deluged the earth with blood, filled it with misery, and caused the whole creation to groan together until now? Murders, treasons, wars, massacres, with all the lighter crimes of robberies, extortions, and oppressions, have all sprung up from these passions.

What need, then, have we all of that great sacrifice which beareth away the sin of the world? and what need of a perpetually recurring application, by faith and repentance, to that blood which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel, and which cleanseth from all sin? What cause have we to repair nightly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy; and daily, that we may find grace to help in time of need. With the eye of faith upon the propitiatory offering that was presented to Divine justice by the Son of God upon the cross, let us continually approach the awful Majesty of heaven and earth, saying—"God be merciful to me a sinner!"

CHAPTER XX.

IMPROVEMENT, BY WAY OF EXHORTATION.

Love may be enforced upon us by a consideration of,

1. *Our own peace and comfort.*

We are not to be indifferent to our own happiness; we cannot be: man can no more will his own misery, or be careless about his own comfort, than he can cease to exist. To seek for enjoyment is the first law of our existence—an inherent and inseparable propensity of our nature. In this respect, the angels, and the spirits of the just above, agree with man upon the earth. There is no sin, therefore, in desiring to be happy; we could not do otherwise, if we would. Ever since the entrance of sin, however, the heart is corrupted in its taste, so as to put evil for good; and, mistaking the nature of happiness, man of course mistakes the way to obtain it. All the pursuits of the world, however varying, and however unlawful, are the operations of this propensity of the human mind; they are all but so many efforts to obtain happiness. To this feeling of the human bosom many of the most comprehensive, beautiful, and encouraging invitations of the Gospel of Christ are addressed; and it is at once the glory and the peculiarity of the Gospel, that it addresses itself first, not to our moral, but to our natural, wants. It meets us, not as craving after holiness, for of this an unenlightened, unconverted sinner

knows nothing; but as craving after happiness,—a desire common to every human bosom: this is the meaning of that exquisite language with which the Apostle almost closes the Word of God—"The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is *athirst* come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The same view appertains to the language of the Prophet—"Ho, every one that *thirsteth*, come ye to the waters." The thirst here mentioned is not, as has been frequently but erroneously stated, the strong desire of a convinced sinner after the blessings of the Gospel; but that of a miserable creature after happiness. The persons addressed by the Prophet are such as were spending their money for that which was not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not; expressions which will not apply to those who are desiring Christ, and the blessings of his Gospel, but to those who are endeavouring to be happy without them: to all these the Lord Jesus is represented as saying, "Hearken diligently unto me. Come unto me: I will give you the sure mercies of David; then shall ye eat that which is good, and your soul shall delight itself in fatness. I am the way to happiness. Men shall be blessed in me." The blessing of the Gospel, by which men are made happy, is not only justification through the righteousness of Christ, but also sanctification by his Spirit. An unrenewed heart can no more be happy in any place or circumstances, than a diseased body can be rendered easy and comfortable by situation and external advantages. Until the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, be regenerated, and brought to love God supremely, there can be no peace; as long as the heart is under the dominion of predominant selfishness, and all those lusts and passions to which it gives rise, it *must* be miserable. In the absence of love, the human bosom must be the seat of uneasiness and distress. Happiness does not arise from *possessions*, so much as from *dispositions:* it is not what a man has, or where he dwells, but what he is. Whatever be the great *source* of felicity, the springs of it must be

seated in our nature. There are certain tempers, the absence of which would render heaven a place of torment to us; and others, which would raise for us an Eden in the dreariest wilderness on earth.

Love is essential to the happiness of a moral agent. This was the original rectitude of our nature. Man was made for love; to love God supremely, and to love whatever is like God, or related to him. This disposition was not only his temper in Paradise, but it was the very paradise of his soul, in which he held the sweetest communion with God and universal being. This tuned his heart to harmony with his Maker and his fellow creatures. Every movement of his heart was a movement of love; and all his desires so many aspirations of love: this constituted at once his honour and his happiness. Hence, the implantation of this grace in his soul is the bringing back of man again to his original state, to his "divinely natural condition;" and, therefore, it is the restoration of him to true complacency and satisfaction. It is true that many, in the absence of this, pretend to some kind of enjoyment, and have it too; for there are pleasures of sin, such as they are: but as to solid happiness,—that which befits and satisfies a rational, moral, and immortal creature,—it may with the greatest truth be affirmed, that the wicked are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest, but is continually casting up mire and dirt.

Let any one consider the passions which love expels from the bosom, or which it keeps in subjection where it does not eradicate them, and ask if that heart can be the seat of comfort, or the region of peace, where they predominate. As well may we expect quietude and comfort in a haunt of banditti, or in a den of wild beasts, or in a field of battle, as in a heart where anger, wrath, malice, envy, pride, and revenge, have taken up their abode. On the other hand, how calm, and composed, and cheerful, is that heart, where meekness is the presiding spirit; where love to God has introduced benevolence to man,—a temper which follows it as closely as its shadow, and has subjugated the temper to the dominion

of charity! Let any one consult his own experience, and inquire if there be not an ineffable delight in the feelings of benevolent regard; whether such a state do not resemble one of those calm and glowing summer evenings, when nature seems to be quietly reclining on the bosom of peace. But how demon-like is the feeling when the turbulent passions gain the ascendency: what agitation and what torment are the result!

Love is the very element which is congenial to the Holy Ghost, and renders the heart the abode of his delight. "The irascible passions," says Mr. Hall, in his beautiful tract on the Work of the Spirit, "surround the soul with a sort of troubled atmosphere, than which nothing is more contrary to the calm and holy light in which the Spirit loves to dwell." "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and *grieve not the Spirit of God*;"—an expression as we have already considered, which, from its context, intimates that the Spirit of God is susceptible of offence; and peculiarly so, by any neglect or violation of the law of love. Every thing connected with our spiritual well-being depends on the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our hearts: when this divine guest retires from our souls, and withdraws his gracious influences, he gives utterance at the same time to the solemn denunciation, "Wo be unto you, if my soul depart from you." The heart of the believer assumes *then* the character and appearance of a temple forsaken by its deity: all is ruin and desolation; the sacrifice ceases, the altar is overthrown, the fire is extinguished. We have all much need to present with the utmost fervour the supplication of the Psalmist, "Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." No witness to our sonship, no consolations, no faith, no hope, no growth in grace, no joy and peace in believing,—can then be enjoyed; instead of this we shall be abandoned to worldly-mindedness, unbelief, despondency, gloomy apprehensions, and foreboding anticipations. Now the Spirit *will* retire from that heart

which is destitute of love, and which is perpetually indulging in tempers of an opposite description. If, then, you would retain this divine visitant—this illustrious guest; if you would indeed continue to be the temples of the Holy Ghost; if you would have God abiding in you;—cultivate the grace of charity; invite him to your souls for this very purpose; yield yourselves to his tender solicitations and gracious drawings; open your minds to his gentle illapses; and when at any time you feel an unusual relenting of mind, follow up the impression and resign your whole selves to the benign power of which you are at that time the happy subjects.

Love will promote your own peace and comfort, *by conciliating the good-will and kindness of others.* In all the commerce of life, we are generally paid back in the same kind of conduct which we maintain towards others. Ill will, and pride, and envy, and selfishness, are sure to excite and to array against us the bad passions of mankind. Under such circumstances, many will take delight in annoying us; all our unkindnesses will come back upon us in innumerable acts of retaliation. But love conciliates esteem. "The meek shall inherit the earth;" their quiet, and inoffensive, and benevolent spirit subdues, by a mild but irresistible power, the most violent and injurious tempers. It has often led the lion, the tiger, and the serpent, by its soft and silken cord; it has charmed to tameness not only the fierceness of wild beasts, but the frantic rage of the furies. It was thus that Jacob subdued the rage of Esau, who was marching against him with purposes of revenge; so that instead of executing his wrath, "he ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell upon his neck, and kissed him." It was thus that David softened the heart of Saul, and disarmed his malignity of its murderous intention. "Is this the voice of my son David?" said the royal persecutor; "and he lifted up his voice, and wept, saying to David, Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." "Who is he that will harm you," said the Apostle, "if

you are followers of that which is good ?" Who can be the enemy of charity ? Who will subject himself to the odium and reproach of being unkind to love ?

In all these ways do we promote our own peace by the cultivation of this temper. And can we be indifferent to our own comfort ? Is it a matter of no moment to us, whether our bosom be the seat of quietude or agitation ? Oh no; it is not, it cannot be. But we have had our attention too much drawn off from ourselves. We have forgotten that it is said, the good man shall be satisfied from himself. We have thought or acted too much as if we thought the sources of peace were without us, and beyond us. We are not yet cured of the disease of earthly-mindedness. We still labour under the mistake, that happiness is something unconnected with moral dispostion; that it is a matter foreign from ourselves, and arising from the adventitious circumstances of wealth, and rank, and fame. It is time to take another course, to try another scheme, and to adopt other means. Let us seek God's grace to open springs of pleasure in ourselves. Not that we are to seek in ourselves for joy and peace, when suffering under a consciousness of sin; not that, as sinners, we are to seek relief from the burden of guilt in our own virtues or graces; not that we are in any sense to look to our own works, as constituting our justifying righteousness: in all these views of our case, we must rejoice only *in the Lord;* but as those who are justified, and at peace with God through Christ, we are to do the work of righteousness, which is peace, and enjoy the effect of righteousness, which is quietness and assurance for ever: we are to covet the rejoicing which Paul speaks of as arising from "the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world." There is the joy of justification, and the joy of sanctification: one, the delight of being restored to God's favour by the work of Christ, and the other the joy of being restored to God's image by the work of the spirit. Many seem afraid of

the joys of holiness, and count all delight but that of faith to be a mere effervescence of self-righteousness, and which only intoxicates the soul with pride. Why, then, has our Lord pronounced his sevenfold beatitude on the graces of a renewed mind? Why has he thus so emphatically and solemnly connected happiness with holiness? The angels are happy, because they are holy: and the heavenly felicity is the perfection of sanctity. In proportion, therefore, as we give ourselves up to the influence and the government of love, we approach to the blessedness of the spirits of just men made perfect. He that lives in love shall drink of the waters of his own cistern, and be satisfied; he shall, every morning, find this heavenly manna lying upon the surface of his soul, and be fed with it to eternal life; and finding himself united by faith to the truth, he shall find peace within, though in the world he should have tribulation.

True religion is no sullen stoicism, or gloomy melancholy; it is not an enthralling tyranny exercised over the noble and generous sentiments of love and delight, as those who are strangers to it imagine: but it is full of a vigorous and masculine felicity, such as ennobles, instead of degrading, the soul; such as invigorates, instead of enervating, its powers; such as does not dispirit and sadden the mind afterwards, when the season of enjoyment is gone by, as do earthly and sensual pleasures; but elevates its views and purposes, and strengthens it for lofty enterprise and heroic deeds, by giving it to drink of the river of life, clear as crystal, which flows out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, and refreshing it with what, in a true and a holy sense, may be called the nectar of immortality. That religion which does not consist in mere airy notions, in cold and heartless orthodoxy, in pharisaic forms and ceremonies, but in faith working by love,—love to God, to Christ, to the brethren, and to the world,—does sometimes, in its higher elevations, lead the soul into a mount of transfiguration, where it glows amidst the splendour that falls on it from the excellent glory; or

takes it to the top of Pisgah, where it sees the distant prospect of the promised land; thus placing it in the porch of heaven, and on the confines of eternity.

2. Love *prepares the soul for making greater attainment in all other parts of religion.* It is produced by knowledge and faith; but, by a reaction, it increases the power of its own cause. It is just that state of heart, which is adapted to the growth of all the plants of religion, that without it are soon spoiled by the impure droppings of our own corrupt and selfish affections. How much will our growth *in knowledge* be aided by this state of soul? "If any man will do the will of God," said Christ, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." Disposition prepares for knowledge. When Zoroaster's scholars asked him what they should do to get *winged souls*, such as might soar aloft in the bright beams of truth, he bade them bathe in the waters of life; and upon being required to state what they are, replied, "The four cardinal virtues, which are the four rivers of Paradise." The reason why truth prevails no more in the world, is because there is so little love. Our views are contracted and dim, not because of the narrowness of the prospect or the want of a sun to enlighten it, but because both the luminary and the scene are veiled by those mists which our corruptions send up from our hearts to becloud our understandings. The holier we are, the clearer will the truth appear to our intellect, and the better able shall we be to bear the brightness of his glory: even as our Lord declares, that it is purity of heart which must prepare us to sustain the beatific vision. The pagan sages also prescribe to their pupils a certain moral disposition, as essential to advancement in knowledge; and so does Christianity. Plato taught, that he who, by universal love and holy affection, was raised above the dominion of selfishness, came into the nearest union with God, and attained to the highest intellectual life: and this is the unction of the Holy One, mentioned by the Apostle whereby we know all things. Our souls are too

clouded and too agitated by the bad feelings of our hearts, to make great attainments in holy light. The moral excellence of the truth is hidden from us; it passes before us in dark outline, an awful and majestic form; we see its back parts, but we discover not the brightness and the beauty of its countenance, as we might do, on account of our want of holy conformity to its nature, and of fitness for its fellowship. Let us, then grow in love, that we may grow in knowledge.

And with respect to *faith*, the more we are brought to feel the influence of the great scheme of redeeming love, in transforming us into its own image, and causing us to love others, as God for Christ's sake has loved us, the more firm will be our conviction of the divine origin of the plan which has thus wrought so marvellous a change upon us. He that believeth hath the witness in himself, in the revolution of feeling, of motive and of aim, which has been produced in his soul. To him the *experimental* evidence of the truth of the Gospel appears with a brightness which none of the rest possess. He is himself an evidence of the divine power which accompanies the truth. No subtle argumentation can reason him out of the consciousness of that change and deliverance which he has experienced from predominant selfishness to love. If all Christians acted fully up to their principles, and drank as deeply as they might do, and should do, of the spirit of charity, the impress of heaven would be so clearly enstamped upon the church, that the divinity of the Gospel could no longer remain a matter of question with any. Who can doubt the heavenly origin of that system which has raised him not only to a heavenly hope, but to a heavenly temper?

3. The *credit and honour of religion* require that we should seek after higher attainments in love. It is well known by all who possess only the most superficial acquaintance with the Word of God, that the end and design of the great scheme of revealed truth,—a scheme which occupied the councils of heaven from eternity, and was accomplished by an incarnation of God himself; that the end for which the Son of God was cruci-

fied,—a mystery which angels desire to look into,—was not merely to bring a set of notions into the world, and to induce men to change one class of opinions and forms for another, still leaving the heart of man as impure and selfish as ever: on the contrary, it is known that God has come down to our nature, to raise us to his; that the whole plan of salvation terminates in the renewal and perfection of the human race in the principles of purity and benevolence. It has been declared, wherever Christianity has travelled, that the essence of religion is love. Hence expectations, which, though rising high, are well founded, have been indulged in reference to the benign and holy temper of the followers of the Lamb. Men have said, "Let us *see* how those *Christians* conduct themselves." What disgust and disappointment have been, in many cases, and to a wide extent, the result! Has the church of God yet answered to its own professions, or to the expectations of its spectators and enemies? Has religion derived all the advantage, in the way of attestation and recommendation, which it should, from the conduct of its friends? Are they seen everywhere so meek, so just, so kind, so candid, so benevolent, so humble,—as to excite admiration, and to extort the concession that the principles which could produce such conduct must be from heaven? On the contrary, have not multitudes who judge of Christianity, not as they should do by itself, but by the conduct of its professors, received, from the offensive exhibitions of pride, and selfishness, and malice, which they are doomed to witness sometimes in the church, an unutterable disgust, an invincible prejudice against Christianity? Where is the spirit of charity which was exhibited in the great Author of Christianity, and which is enjoined in his precepts, and contained in his system?—is a question a thousand times asked, even by those who live in a Christian land, but who see little there of universal love. Creeds and catechisms, forms and ceremonies, devotional seasons and religious observances, will be thought of little worth, and will do little to ensure the esteem and to engage the imitation

of mankind, in the absence of that disposition which all these things are adapted and intended to produce. The world's demand of the church is for love: "We have had," say they, "enough of opinions; let us now have actions: we have had more than enough of articles of faith; let us now see more of the fruits of love." And how shall we meet that demand? Not by exhibiting less of truth, but more of love: not by giving up our creeds, or our forms, but by carrying them out into all the beautiful effects of beneficence and purity.

Christians; the character of religion is entrusted to our keeping, and we are continually defaming it, or raising its reputation; and are either betraying it into the hands of its enemies, or conciliating their esteem towards it. It is high time for us to be more aware of our responsibility; high time for us to consider that we are perpetually employed in increasing or diminishing the ignominy of the cross. The good conduct of professors is a converting ordinance, and an edifying one too. "Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify God your heavenly father." "Shine as lights of the world, holding forth the word of life." How? Not by attachment to doctrine merely: no; the light of truth will do nothing without the light of love. A fiery zeal for truth, unaccompanied by love, is the meteor that misleads, or the lightning that kills, or the eruption that overwhelms and consumes;—all of which men are afraid of, and retire from: but a zeal for the truth, which is accompanied by benevolence, and produces it, is like the orb of day,—men come to its light, and flock to the brightness of its rising.

O that my feeble voice could be heard, and my counsel followed, when I call the followers of Christ to a serious consideration of the necessity, for the sake of the credit of religion, of being like their great Saviour and leader! O that my words could have weight, when I entreat them, as they regard the reputation of that Gospel which is all their salvation and all their desire, to covet earnestly, and to pursue constantly, this "more

excellent way!" O that I could prevail, when I beseech them—aye, *beseech* them—to study the genius of their religion in its facts, doctrines, duties, and examples, to see if it be not love! O that I could succeed in my wishes and my efforts, that they might no longer, by the indulgence of their passions, strengthen the bands of iniquity which bind men to their sins, and raise an enmity against religion which shall aid and accelerate the work of damnation! O that a new era would commence in the history of the church, when finding what a cloud had been brought upon the truth as it is in Jesus, by the bigotry, intolerance, and enormous cruelties of corrupt and persecuting communities; by the spirit of party which has, more or less, infected all sects; by the rancour of controversy; by the passion for war; by the pride of pharisaism; by the schisms of the brethren; by the envy, covetousness, and malice, of professors;—all true Christians would be baptized afresh unto repentance in the pure and peaceful waters of the sanctuary, confessing their sins of uncharitableness and ill will: then might it be expected that, as in the case of the Divine head, so in that of the mystical body, the Holy Ghost, in his dove-like form, would descend, to "rest upon it," and, by an earthly glory, prove and display its heavenly origin.

4. By this means, we shall be enabled, in a very eminent degree, *to glorify God.* For a man to live for himself, as the ultimate end of his existence, is no less mean, and low, and little, than it is wicked. Selfishness of this kind not only pollutes the soul, but degrades it: it limits its desires within a very narrow compass; imprisons its hopes in a poor contemptible hovel; and drags down its ambition from the glory of the infinite and eternal God, to the paltry and insignificant interests of a finite and unworthy creature. The heart of the real Christian is too large to be compressed within such boundaries: understanding that God is the author of his existence, he makes him the end of it; that as he came from him, he may be continually returning to him. Everything, in point of dignity and elevation, is to be estimated by the end it seeks. Its aims give it what-

ever value it possesses, and fashion it into their own likeness. Nothing can make that great, which only aims at what is little; while a sublime nature is imparted to that which seeks a sublime end. Now, a higher end, no creature in any world, however exalted, can propose to itself, than the glory of God; and a lower one, the humblest believer in all God's family on earth should never seek. This is, indeed, to ennoble the soul; and enlarges it into a universal and comprehensive capacity of enjoying that one unbounded goodness, which is God himself; it makes it spread out and dilate itself in the infinite sphere of the Divine Being and blessedness, and makes it live in the fulness of him that filleth all in all. "We glorify God, by entertaining the impression of his glory upon us, and not by communicating any kind of glory to him. Then does a good man become the tabernacle of God, wherein the divine *Shechinah* does rest, and which the divine glory fills, when the frame of his mind and life is wholly according to that idea and pattern which he receives from the mount. We best glorify him, when we grow most like him; and we then act most for his glory, when a true spirit of sanctity, justice, and meekness, runs through all our actions; when we so live as becomes those that converse with the great mind and wisdom of the whole world; with that Almighty Spirit that made, supports, and governs all things; with that Being from whence all good flows, and in which there is no spot, stain, or shadow of evil; and so, being captivated and overcome by the sense of divine loveliness and goodness, endeavour to be like him, and to conform ourselves as much as may be to him. As God's seeking his own glory in respect of us is most properly the flowing forth of his goodness upon us; so our seeking the glory of God is most properly our endeavouring a participation of his goodness, and an earnest incessant pursuing after the divine perfection. When God becomes so great in our eyes, and all created things so little, that we reckon nothing as worthy of our aims and ambition, but a serious participation of the divine nature, and the exercise of di-

vine virtues—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, and the like; when the soul, beholding the infinite beauty and loveliness of the Divinity, and then looking down and beholding all created perfection mantled over with darkness, is ravished into love and admiration of that never-setting brightness, and endeavours after the greatest resemblance of God, in justice, love, and goodness; when conversing with him by a secret feeling of the virtue, sweetness, and power of his goodness, we endeavour to assimilate ourselves to him;—then we may be said to glorify him indeed."* These fine sentiments should be engraven on our hearts, that they may be constantly reduced by us to practice. O, who that would have his nature exalted to the highest pitch of honour and happiness, ought not to cultivate that disposition which is the brightest representation contained in our world of its Divine Creator. To be the instrument of giving publicity to human excellence, of fixing the attention of others upon those qualities which, although eminently praiseworthy, were but little known, and exciting admiration on their behalf, is no mean or uninteresting employment; but to exhibit a temper, which is the likeness of God, to manifest a virtue, in reference to which it may be said that it is an image of Deity, what an unspeakable dignity and delight. This is, in the highest sense of the term, to be raised into fellowship with God,—a word that signifies not only an act of intercourse, but a state of communion; a communion of ends and aims, a kind of partnership in purpose and pursuit. God is ever seeking his own glory, as his ultimate aim in all his works: his perfection prevents him from seeking a lower end, and a higher he *cannot* seek: to manifest himself is his supreme purpose; and we can easily imagine that the manifestation of love is the end to which all the other displays of his attributes are made subservient. Have we any hallowed ambition in our nature here is scope for its gratification, here is an ob-

* "Select Discourses, by John Smith;" a book which for its combination of learning, genius, and piety, has scarcely its parallel in the English language.

ject towards which we may let forth all its energies,—to hold communion with God in the manifestation of his glory: what can angels do more, except it be to do it more perfectly? Christians; see your high vocation: you are set apart not only by God, but for him; constituted a people, to show forth his praise; appointed, not only to receive his grace, but to reflect his beauty. *Your* highest glory is to manifest *His*. His image is the richest ornament of your moral nature; and to show it to the world, your great business upon earth. The meanest Christian shows forth more of God than the heavens which declare his glory, and the firmament which showeth his handy work: he is a brighter object in the universe, and teaches more of its infinite Author, than the sun in his mid-day splendour, or the moon in her beauty, attended by her starry train, that glitter upon the vault of night. But to rise to this eminence, we must excel in love; we must put forth all its excellencies, and put them forth in all their vigour, and fulness, and harmony,—each in its time, and its place, and its occasion; for then shall we be like God: and to be like him is, in the highest sense, to glorify him; and to glorify him, by being made partakers of a divine nature, is to receive, so far as a creature can receive it, a kind of inferior apotheosis, and to live up to the very height of our being, our honour, and our bliss.

5. Another motive, and it is the last we shall advance, for the cultivation of love is,—that *it is the state of mind which carries the soul on to its ultimate perfection in the celestial state, meetens it for that state, and gives it a foretaste of its felicity.*

It has been observed by the learned CUDWORTH, who appears to have borrowed the idea from PLUTARCH, that Divine Wisdom hath so ordered the frame of the whole universe, that every thing should have its own appropriate receptacle, to which it shall be drawn by all the mighty force of an irresistible affinity: and as all heavenly bodies press towards the common centre of gravity, so is all sin, by a kind of strong sympathy and magnetic influence, drawn towards hell; while, on the

other hand, all holiness is continually drawn upwards to heaven, to embosom itself in glory. Hell is nothing else but that orb in which all evil moves; and heaven is the opposite hemisphere of light, where holiness, which is perfect love, eternally revolves. Remove sin and disobedience out of hell, it will immediately lose its darkness, and shine out in all the serenity and beauty of heaven; remove love from heaven, and its sun will set amidst the darkness and the storms of everlasting night. Heaven is not merely a thing to come; it is in one sense a present possession; for "he that believeth in the Son *hath* everlasting life." It is rather a state than a place,—a state within us, rather than a thing without us; it is the likeness, and the enjoyment, and the service, of God; that which every true Christian carries in his bosom now, and to which he will fully enter hereafter, when he shall be made perfect in love. To this state all true religion is ever tending: the spirit of love is the motion and progress of the soul towards its eternal rest in the presence of God. No man can be prepared for the celestial felicity, while his heart is destitute of this; and whosoever has most of it, knows most of the unseen and ineffable joys of the righteous. He lives in the vestibule of the heavenly temple; and is ready, whenever its doors shall be opened, to enter into the dwelling place of God. The image of God is upon him, and the *likeness* of Deity is always attended with something of the *happiness* of the Deity. O the bliss of that state, where the faculties of the mind, inconceivably expanded, shall let in the full streams of the divine beneficence, and open themselves to the uttermost to comprehend the breadth and length, the depth and height, of that love which passeth knowledge; where divine goodness will so act directly upon the soul, as to raise it to a state of holy enjoyment surpassing all our present imaginations.

What a motive to go on in the pursuit of charity! Who does not wish to become better acquainted with his eternal state? Who does not wish to have a more correct knowledge of that condition in which he is to remain for ever? To attain to this, we cannot turn

aside the veil which conceals the holy of holies from our view; we cannot look upon the throne of God: we cannot be rapt like Paul into the third heaven: no; but we may, like John, see the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven, and feel it taking possession of our hearts in the spirit of love. Rarely, indeed, do Christians attain, in the present state, in this unquiet world, to that calm repose of mind, that serene enjoyment, attendant upon the subjugation of the passions to the gentle dominion of benevolence, which conveys to them any very high notion of the supreme felicity which must be connected with the consummation of such a temper. Happy seasons do occur; but, alas! how seldom, when they are so far released from the influence of every selfish and angry affection—when they so far feel the transforming influence of that divine beneficence which they contemplate—as to be conscious of the perfect felicity which must arise from their being filled with all the fulness of love. Let us seek more and more after these anticipations of our eternal state: we have not already attained, neither are we already perfect; but, forgetting the things that are behind, let us reach onward, that we may apprehend that for which also we are apprehended in Christ Jesus. Heaven is not only above us, before us, beyond us, but may be within us: we may all know more of it than we do: let us become more and more anxious to accumulate, not the perishing riches of silver and gold, but the imperishable wealth of a holy and heavenly temper: let us aspire to immortality beyond the grave, and to the spirit of it upon earth,—ever remembering that a Christian is one who professes to be born from heaven and to be bound to it; one who has more of heaven than of earth in his disposition; one who already dwelleth in heaven by dwelling in God; one who is meetened for converse with the innumerable company of angels, with the spirits of just men made perfect, with God the judge of all, and with Jesus the mediator of the new covenant! one who bears the impress of eternity, and is irradiated with some beams of the celestial glory;—and how can he give meaning, or con-

sistency, or truth, to professions so high and so holy, except it be by that love which is the fruit of regeneration, the effect of faith, the necessary operation of love to God; and which, being cherished in the soul by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, comprehends in its embraces the whole universe, and, in the exercise of its good-will towards those who come under its influence, "suffereth long and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; covereth all things; believeth all things;" endureth all things; and of which it is sublimely said, that "CHARITY NEVER FAILETH."

THE END.

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